



Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDPD/2019/WG.46/Report  
4 May 2020  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

## Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting on Mainstreaming Climate Action into National Development Planning in the Arab Region  
Amman, 25-27 November 2019

### REPORT

#### SUMMARY

The Expert Group Meeting on Mainstreaming Climate Action into National Development Planning in the Arab Region was held in Amman from 25 to 27 November 2019. More than 80 participants attended the meeting, including representatives of ministries of planning, finance, water, energy, agriculture, transport and the environment in Arab States, as well as inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the region. Representatives from United Nations organizations and multilateral development banks also contributed to the meeting deliberations.

Participants exchanged experiences and lessons learned and discussed best practices for mainstreaming climate action into sectoral and national development planning, with special focus on the water, energy and transport sectors. Substantive presentations and discussions covered institutional and policy frameworks as well as integrated policy and planning processes to facilitate mainstreaming of climate considerations in sectoral and national development planning. Means of implementation were also a focus of discussions, including sessions and discussions on climate finance, technology, and capacity building needs and opportunities.

The meeting concluded with key messages regarding the main challenges and lessons learned for integrating climate change concerns into national development planning. The deliberations also covered discussion on the role of international organizations and specialized United Nations organizations in supporting countries in formulating sectoral development plans for enhanced climate action.

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## Introduction

1. The Expert Group Meeting on Mainstreaming Climate Change in National Development Planning in the Arab Region was jointly organized by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The three-day meeting was convened at the Kempinski Hotel in Amman, Jordan from 25 to 27 November 2019.

2. The overall objective of the expert group meeting was to enhance the capacity and knowledge of government officials from the Arab region on how to effectively mainstream climate action into national development plans. The meeting also aimed to exchange knowledge and raise awareness on best practices and opportunities for mainstreaming climate action and nationally determined contributions (NDCs) into national development policies, strategies, programmes and practices. Specifically, the meeting objectives focused on:

- Discussion of barriers and gaps affecting the ability of countries to advance climate action through development planning, including access to finance, technology and capacity building;
- Identifying entry points for integrating climate actions into national development and/or sectoral plans;
- Facilitating opportunities for the exchange of experiences and for South-South cooperation across diverse sectors on challenges, opportunities and instruments for mainstreaming climate considerations into national development planning;
- Building a knowledge sharing and dissemination network on aligning climate actions and NDCs with national development priorities; and
- Strengthening partnerships to advance implementation and climate action in the Arab region.

3. The three-day meeting included ten sessions. Section I of this report highlights the main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. Section II provides a summary of the presentations and the main topics of discussions held during each session. Section III summarizes the organization of work and recaps the meeting agenda, participants and evaluation results. The full documentation of the meeting is available at the following address: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/mainstreaming-climate-action-national-development-planning>.

### I. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSIONS

4. Summaries of presentations and discussions are presented below for each substantive meeting session.

#### A. INFORMING CLIMATE POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN THE ARAB REGION

5. ESCWA delivered a series of stage setting presentations covering key foundational concepts and ideas to inform the expert group meeting. Presentation topics included: climate change in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement commitments; vulnerability of water-dependent sectors and the energy sector to the impacts of climate change in the Arab region, and; transport and the sustainable development in the Arab region.

6. A presentation by the University of Blida of Algeria highlighted on the importance of local communities as key entry points for adaptation planning, and the need to engage community stakeholders for the efficient implementation of climate initiatives.

## B. SECTOR PLANNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FOR ENHANCED CLIMATE ACTION

7. The session opened with an overview presentation by Mr. Abdel-Aziz on the importance of linking NDCs with the national development planning processes. This highlighted that mainstreaming climate commitments across national and sectoral planning processes supports better access to financing opportunities for climate actions.

8. The subsequent panel discussion featured experiences and lessons learned from institutional mechanisms for coherent policy making. The Palestinian experience focused on the establishment of a national climate change committee to pursue coherence for policy formulation across sectors. Kuwait shared its recent experience setting up a national coordination committee on climate change under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, which provides a platform for enhanced cross-sectoral collaboration at the national level. A representative from the Embassy of the Netherlands in Amman presented the Dutch experience adopting the National Climate Agreement of the Netherlands and the challenges associated with bringing disparate stakeholders on board. The League of Arab States (LAS) presented the work of the recently established High-Level Joint Committee for Water and Agriculture in the Arab Region and its aim to provide a platform for policy coordination and coherence across the water and agriculture sectors. The LAS also noted that the Committee had identified water use efficiency in the agriculture sector under changing climate conditions as one of its priorities of work. The WHO Centre for Environmental Health then presented the Arab Strategy on Health and the Environment (2017-2030), which includes activities to support Arab countries to reduce morbidity and premature mortality caused by environmental risks, including risks that may be exacerbated by climate change.

9. Ensuing discussions emphasized the importance of strengthening local institutions for the design, planning, and implementation of successful national adaptation plans, as well as ensuring a fair share of climate responsibility among the various sectors at the national level.

## C. WORKING GROUPS ON CLIMATE MAINSTREAMING BY SECTOR

10. Three working groups were organized under this session on climate mainstreaming in the water, energy and transport sectors. Two presentations or case studies on mainstreaming climate action at the sector level were presented by representatives of Arab States at the start of each sectoral working group; and provided a basis for discussions and exchange among the regional stakeholders in the working group.

### *WG I: Lessons Learned on Climate Mainstreaming in the Water Sector*

11. The working group opened with a presentation delivered by the Ministry of Agriculture of Tunisia on the national experience incorporating climate change in the new water code. This was followed by a case study delivered by the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt on climate change in the 2050 Strategy and the National Water Resources Plan for Egypt 2017-2037 (NWRP 2017-2037).

12. Issues raised during the discussions emphasized temporal and spatial variabilities in precipitation induced by climate change and their impacts on national water management and planning. Palestine shared its experience addressing flow variabilities by incorporating climate change considerations in water sector reforms, updating water sector laws, and establishing national committees on climate change in relevant sectors to support a coordinated and sustainable response to climate change challenges.

### *WG II: Lessons Learned on Climate Mainstreaming in the Energy Sector*

13. ESCWA opened the working group with a presentation on the interface between Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals 7 and

13. The National Agency for Energy Conservation (ANME) of Tunisia then presented on the role of NDCs in enhancing energy efficiency in the country.

14. Discussions highlighted the need to align SDG7 and SDG13 implementation strategies with NDC implementation plans to foster coherence, promote coordination, and maximize desired outcomes. Participants also agreed that, since available financial resources are limited, efforts should focus on prioritizing and harmonizing funding opportunities for sustainable development and climate action. A further recommendation was that resources should be directed to develop reliable data and information systems, as these are crucial to design and develop bankable projects at the country level.

#### *WG III: Lessons Learned on Climate Mainstreaming in the Transport Sector*

15. The Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water of Morocco opened the working group with a case study on low carbon development in the transport and logistical sector. The Ministry of Transport of Tunisia then presented on the ecological impact of the national network of programmed logistics zones.

16. Discussions highlighted the various national strategies and plans put in place to support energy reduction targets in Morocco, which include: the national strategy for transport; NDC implementation plans; the national strategy for sustainable development, and; the energy efficiency strategy. Challenges implementing transport sector reforms in Tunisia were discussed and recommendation actions to address these challenges included: enhance cross-sector coordination; consolidate the legislative and regulatory framework for transport and logistics; engage the private sector, and; build capacity in transport logistics.

#### D. POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR FACILITATING CLIMATE MAINSTREAMING

17. ESCWA opened the session opened with a presentation on the behavioural perspective in integrated national development planning in the Arab region, which examined the cognitive processes that influence choices and decision making for strategic development planning and budgeting.

18. The League of Arab States (LAS) then presented on the role of the water-energy-food nexus and climate-proofing to advance climate action in the Arab region. The nexus approach at the Arab regional level was highlighted as a decision-making framework that employs systems thinking to identify cross sectoral impacts, explore trade-offs, and help policy makers achieve greater policy coherence.

19. Subsequently, the IsDB presented its new institutional climate change policy and action plan (2020-2025). The presentation highlighted policy targets centred on support for climate-resilient and sustainable projects and on the implementation of sectoral and national development plans in member states. The policy pillars include: mainstreaming climate action in bank's operations; promoting climate change resilience; supporting the transition to a green economy, and; leveraging financial resources from various available sources. IsDB criteria for assessing project eligibility for climate finance were also presented.

20. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH presented experience from the MENA region on implementing low-emission, climate-resilient development pathways. This included the role of GIZ in supporting efforts to integrate climate action into development planning at the national, sectoral and subnational level, including both policy and implementation. GIZ has contributed to establishing an electronic platform (AdaptationCommunity.net) to provide information on products, methods, and tools that can facilitate planning and implementing adaptation actions.

21. Ensuing discussions focused on means to mobilize and integrate external climate funds into national budgets, and ways to manage the variability in flows characterizing this type of funds. Carbon

taxes were also discussed, and it was emphasized that this is usually a controversial item in climate negotiations because carbon pricing could be used to transfer the brunt of the responsibility for climate action to developing countries.

#### E. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION FOR ADVANCING INCLUSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

22. ESCWA opened the session with an overview of international climate finance flows to the Arab region, which demonstrated that flows remain well below the requested levels as identified in their national NDCs. Also, the quality and quantity of public international climate finance flows from developed countries to Arab States does not match the demand nor the objectives of the Paris agreement. Adaptation is the priority of Arab States but flows to mitigation exceed flows to adaptation by a factor of 4-5. Loans exceed grants, also by a factor of 4-5, despite the need for additional grant finance. Furthermore, distribution among Arab states is uneven, with just 2% flowing to Arab LDCs in the most recent reporting year (2016).

23. ALCOR Consult from Tunisia then presented an assessment of financial and technological needs for sustainable energy transitions, with key findings and recommendations. Decarbonizing the energy sector requires the mobilization of technological solutions and additional funding. Arab States should accelerate the transition to less carbon-intensive energy sources through actions, including: integrating this vision into strategies; building capacity for technology transfer; energy sector reform; mainstreaming the energy transition, and; upgrading domestic financing. While private sources of funds will likely play a leading role in the decarbonization process, public investments will still be needed to ensure a conducive enabling environment through policy, planning, capacity building and training, and infrastructure upgrading.

24. The Embassy of Sweden in Jordan presented the Swedish approach to integrating gender and climate change in national agendas, and how both these concepts inform Swedish foreign policy. It was emphasized that a better understanding of the relationship between gender, environment and Climate Change is key to addressing environmental challenges in an equitable and sustainable way. The role of Sweden in incorporating a gender perspective in the global climate change negotiations process was also emphasized. Further, the presentation highlighted that climate change initiatives are formulated taking into account the different ways by which men and women are affected by climate variabilities.

25. The State of Palestine presented the experience of planning and pursuing a successful Green Climate Fund (GCF) project proposal. The project on “Water Banking and Adaptation of Agriculture to Climate Change in Northern Gaza” addresses the vulnerability of the water and agricultural sectors to climate change and was approved by the GCF Board in October 2019. The project aims to support investments in innovative hydraulic technologies for Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) to augment and conserve groundwater resources in the Gaza Strip and respond to climate change impacts on the agricultural sector. The presentation also reviewed the technical support provided during the application process and the challenges faced and overcome during the submission process.

26. Ensuing discussions emphasized limited access to financial resources as the main challenge to advancing climate action in the Arab region. In that context, innovative financing resources such as green sukuk and resilience bonds, among other instruments, were discussed and their applicability to the Arab region was assessed. Participants mentioned the challenges associated with the complex nature of the GCF application process and suggested a simplification of the existing steps. In tandem, capacity building is needed at the Arab regional level to facilitate access to international climate funding.

#### F. CLIMATE FINANCE, BUDGETING AND EXPENDITURE REVIEWS

27. The session opened with a presentation by UNDP on coding and tracking climate expenditures in national budgets. The role of budgets in translating policies and political commitments into implementable

actions was highlighted. The Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Reviews (CPEIR) tool was developed to support analysis of a country institutional setup and expenditure for climate action. The tool supports climate budget coding and hence provides an expenditure tracking system. The information gathered by the tool can be used to trigger and guide more climate responsive budgeting.

28. A presentation by APEX Conseil discussed the role of climate change ratings as a tool for better accessing climate finance. The sovereign climate and carbon rating tool integrates climate change and development issues by tracking progress across 234 criteria. The tool monitors progress implementing climate commitments such as national GHG mitigation policies, carbon transition plans, UNFCCC commitments, NDC implementation plans, and the objectives of the Paris agreement. The rating model also guides development agencies and the finance community in the implementation of low-carbon investment programmes.

29. Ensuing discussions reiterated the importance of national sources of funding for climate action and the role of budget tagging and climate change ratings in providing reliable tools and mechanisms to monitor the impact and efficiency of budgets allocated to climate action. Participants also agreed that these tools and systems support the institutionalization of the assessment processes.

#### G. WORKING GROUPS ON MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

30. The participants broke into two working group to discuss and elaborate on thematic aspects of mainstreaming climate action into national development planning, including the following: (1) Integrating policy planning and design processes for climate mainstreaming; (2) Climate finance, technology, and capacity building needs for climate mainstreaming. Members of each working group reported back on the main issues and concerns raised and discussed during their respective break-out groups. The section below summarizes the key outcomes:

##### *WG I: Integrating policy planning and design for climate mainstreaming*

31. The main limitations for a transition from a sectoral planning approach to a more integrated approach across the Arab region was presented and discussed. A starting point for improved integration is the formulation of clear, consistent and achievable climate action plans. The engagement of the various groups of stakeholders specially the most vulnerable is crucial for efficient integration. The group discussions also emphasized the role of engaging the private sector for technology transfer and to secure the funds needed for enhanced climate action at the national level. Deliberations also highlighted well-defined standards and norms as a possible avenue for the integration of climate change concerns in development projects at the national level.

##### *WG II: Climate finance, technology, and capacity building needs for climate mainstreaming*

32. The group discussants emphasized the importance of national resource mobilization for climate related priorities and that availability of domestic sources of funds helps in leveraging international funding. The potential sources of domestic funding for climate action were considered and discussed and included pension funds, foreign remittances, insurance premiums, levies on imports, among others. Participants emphasized that innovation systems across the Arab region need to be further expanded to support the development of environment-friendly technologies. Discussions also acknowledged the role of indigenous technologies as efficient means of adaptation in rural settings.

33. The capacity building needs identified include: development of bankable proposals; elaboration of an effective monitoring process; engaging young leaders and local communities, and; intensifying the

exchange of experiences. The importance of retaining and institutionalizing the enhanced capacities as well as skills and knowledge acquired within host organizations was emphasized.

#### H. ADVANCING NDC AMBITION AND IMPLEMENTATION

34. The Ministry of environment in Jordan opened this session with a case study on the national Climate Action Enhancement Package (CAEP) for supporting NDC ambition and implementation at the global, regional and national levels. Jordan launched the climate change bylaw (article 31) in 2019, to provides an institutional framework for cooperation on climate policies at the national level. Also In 2019, Jordan launched a GCF readiness project to raise funds for implementing of a portfolio of priority climate actions.

35. This was followed by an IsDB on Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and climate finance in the context of Paris alignment. In 2018, a joint framework was adopted to align the MDBs' activities with the goals of the Paris Agreement through core areas of intervention, focusing on alignment with mitigation goals, adaptation and climate-resilient operations, accelerated contribution to the transition through climate finance, engagement and policy development support, reporting and alignment across internal activities.

36. Ensuing discussions highlighted MDB focus on support for development projects and initiatives with climate change co-benefits. Nonetheless, the identification of sector priorities towards low-carbon development pathways (LCDP) will remain largely the responsibility of countries.

#### I. MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR INTEGRATED CLIMATE ACTION

37. The IsDB opened the session with a presentation on mobilizing private resources. The data and information collected demonstrated a large potential role for private domestic sources of finance in supporting NDC implementation in the Arab region. The presentation highlighted the importance of non-traditional resources to complement traditional sources in enhancing the predictability of flows.

38. The ministry of Environment of Egypt presented the country experience in mobilizing resources for climate action. Egypt's progress transitioning to more sustainable national development pathways was also presented and discussed, with specific mention of three GCF-funded climate mitigation and adaptation projects in Egypt.

39. The IsDB then presented its "Reverse Linkage Mechanism" for South-South cooperation. The modality is a technical cooperation mechanism whereby member countries exchange knowledge, expertise, technology, and resources to develop capacities and devise solutions for their autonomous development.

40. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) presented financing strategies to advance development pathways for a just energy transition. The concept of the just transition was defined as one that considers the social impact of climate change policies and projects. The presentation explained how EBRD strategies integrate social justice considerations in financing climate projects.

#### J. THE WAY FORWARD

41. The session included a presentation by UNFCCC and the League of Arab States on the Needs-based Climate Finance Project in the Arab Region. This project is being implemented in collaboration by the UNFCCC, LAS, and ESCWA, and aims to support the mobilization of climate finance for to meet the needs of developing countries based on their priority mitigation and adaptation targets, in accordance with the goals outlined in their NDCs, NAPs and other relevant policies or strategies. The project is being



implemented in the Arab region in collaboration between ESCWA and the LAS to support Arab countries in the assessment of their finance needs for climate action.

42. This was followed by a panel discussion on the main conclusions and key messages for mainstreaming climate action in the water, energy and transport sectors in the Arab region.

- (a) *Water*: Water was emphasized as a high priority concern in most Arab States due to the impacts of climate change that will exacerbate existing water stress and scarcity. Recommendations including taking urgent measures to strengthen of water governance, with attention to strengthening policy frameworks, improving information and data sharing, developing decision support tools, addressing capacity building needs, and improving access to finance.
- (b) *Energy*: The transition towards sustainable energy systems was highlighted as a priority in the Arab region. Key steps for the transition include improved resource management to enhance energy efficiency and diversification of the energy mix.
- (c) *Transport*: The central role of the transport sector in supporting economic development at the regional, national and local levels was highlighted. A recommendation was made to establish a collaborative mechanism to support Arab states to share knowledge and exchange experience, to support the transition towards more sustainable modes of transport.

43. The session closed with a presentation by the Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT) regarding their preparations for the COP25, which took place in December 2019 in Spain. It was also advised that a video recording on SLoCaT efforts to advance transport-relevant climate priorities in national and sectoral development planning that support synergies across Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) under the 2030 Agenda and NDCs under the Paris Agreement would be made available to participants.

## K. CLOSING SESSION

44. The organizers made closing remarks that re-emphasized the avenues through which IsDB and ESCWA can support Arab States to transition to more sustainable development pathways. Available mechanisms and tools include capacity building and training, exchange of experience and lessons learned through South-South cooperation and reverse linkages, and monitoring progress of climate action. Advancing work on SDGs related to climate was also highlighted as key to supporting progress under SDG13 and the Paris Agreement.

## II. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

### A. VENUE AND DATE

45. The expert group meeting on mainstreaming climate action into national development planning in the Arab region was organized from 25 to 27 November 2019 in Amman, Jordan.

### B. OPENING

46. The meeting was formally opened by Mr. Ahmad Al Qabany, Manager of the Climate Change Division, Resilience and Social Development Division at IsDB, and Ms. Rola Majdalani, Director of the Sustainable Development Policies Division at ESCWA.

### C. PARTICIPANTS

47. More than 80 participants attended the meeting, including representatives of ministries of planning, finance, water, energy, agriculture, transport and the environment in Arab States, as well as inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the region. Representatives from United Nations organizations and multilateral development banks also contributed to the meeting deliberations.

### D. AGENDA

48. Presentations and discussions were made over thirteen sessions. The agenda of the meeting is summarized below:

- (a) Opening statements
- (b) Informing Climate Policy Frameworks in the Arab Region
- (c) Sector Planning and National Development Planning for Enhanced Climate Action
- (d) Working Groups on Climate Mainstreaming by Sector
- (e) Policy Frameworks for Facilitating Climate Mainstreaming
- (f) Means of Implementation for Advancing Inclusive Climate Action
- (g) Climate Finance, Budgeting and Expenditure Reviews
- (h) Working Groups on Means of Implementation
- (i) Reporting Back by the Working Groups on Means of Implementation
- (j) Advancing NDC Ambition and Implementation
- (k) Mobilizing Resources for Integrated Climate Action
- (l) The Way Forward.

### E. EVALUATION

49. An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to participants to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the meeting. The form was made available in both English and Arabic languages. The organizers received 27 questionnaires and information provided was compiled and analysed. The feedback received was positive with more than 90 per cent of respondents rating the overall quality of the meeting as good to very good. The majority of those who completed the survey found that the meeting achieved its objectives (around 90 per cent) and more than two-thirds agreed that their expectations were met.

50. The meeting organization was rated as good for around 90 per cent of the respondents, most of whom (74 per cent) found that the issues discussed were relevant to their field of expertise. All of those who completed their questionnaires indicated that the meeting represented a good to very good opportunity to exchange information with other participating experts. For the vast majority of the respondents (around 90 per cent), written material distributed by ESCWA and the presentations delivered during the meeting by contributing experts were deemed to be of good quality. The need for follow-up activities to the meeting was recommended in all questionnaires. The nature of requested follow-up activities included training and capacity building to support access to climate finance, as well better exchange of experience and lessons learned from countries experience in mainstreaming climate action into national development planning.

## F. DOCUMENTATION

51. The meeting information note, agenda and presentation delivered during the expert group meeting can be accessed, through the following link: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/mainstreaming-climate-action-national-development-planning>.

## ANNEX I

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#### UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES

##### EGYPT

**Mr. Ragab Abdelazim**

First Undersecretary  
Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +202 35449420/30  
Email: ragabazim@hotmail.com

**Mr. Mohamed Khalil**

Deputy Chief of Mission  
Embassy of the Republic of Egypt to Morocco  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Rabat, Morocco  
Tel: +212 53 773 1834  
+212 53 773 1833  
Email: mohamed.khalil.un@gmail.com

**Ms. Lydia Elewa**

Manager  
Climate Change Researches Department  
Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency  
Ministry of Environment  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +202 252 46 162  
Fax: +202 252 46 162  
Email: lydiaelewa7@hotmail.com

##### IRAQ

**Mr. Jamal Mohsin Ali**

Director General  
Planning and Follow-up Directorate  
Ministry of Water Resources  
Baghdad, Iraq  
Tel: 964 177.20.240  
Email: planningdep00@gmail.com  
jamalmuhsen@yahoo.com

**Mr. Wasfi Abdulameer Abbas**

Director General  
Center for Studies and Engineering Design  
Ministry of Water Resources  
Baghdad, Iraq  
Tel: 964 177.20.240  
Email: wasfiabdulamir@yahoo.com

##### JORDAN

**Mr. Majdi Abu Hammoudeh**

Director  
Transport Safety and Environment Directorate  
Ministry of Transport  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 551 8111, ext. 1150  
Email: Majdi.Abuhammoudeh@mot.gov.jo

**Mr. Mohammad Al Dwairi**

Secretary General Assistant for Strategic  
Planning  
Ministry of Water and Irrigation  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 7 7574 4046  
Email: Mohammad\_Aldwairi@mwi.gov.jo

**Ms. Sara Al-Haleeq**

Head of Adaptation Section  
Climate Change Directorate  
Ministry of Environment  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 5560113  
Fax: +962 6 5516377  
Email: sara-alhaleeq@moenv.gov.jo  
sara\_alhaleeq@hotmail.com

**Mr. Hasan Al-Heyari**

Director  
Oil and Natural Gas Directorate  
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 5803060, ext. 1105  
Email: studies.ngp@memr.gov.jo  
Hasan.AlHeyari@memr.gov.jo

**Ms. Ghussaina Ghassan AlHilu**

Director  
Natural Resources Projects  
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 523 6696  
Email: Ghussaina@yahoo.com

**Mr. Thaer Al Momany**

Head  
Climate Change Unit  
Ministry of Water and Irrigation  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 65 803 060  
Email: Thair\_Almomani@mwi.gov.jo

**Mr. Zeyad Alsaaydeh**

Director  
Rural Electrification Department  
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: + 962 65 803 060  
Fax: +962 6 5865714  
Email: zeyad.alsaaeda@memr.gov.jo

**Ms. Maysa'a Shaqaqha**

Project Engineer  
Development Plans & Programs Department  
Ministry of Planning & International  
Cooperation  
Ambassador of Sustainable Development Goals-  
Jordan (AYSDN)  
Tel/Fax: +962 6 4629308  
Email: maysaa.shaqaqha@mop.gov.jo

**KUWAIT**

**Mr. Mohammad Al Seidan**

Head of Environmental Health Department  
Public Health Administration  
Ministry of Health  
Kuwait City, Kuwait  
Tel: +965 246 17 000  
Email: malseaidan@gmail.com  
malseaidan@moh.gov.kw

**MAURITANIA**

**Mr. Ali Mohamed Abdellahi**

Mission Manager  
Minister's Office  
Ministry of Hydraulics and Sanitation  
Nouakchott, Mauritania  
Tel: +222 22 394 601  
Email: sep\_dlcp@yahoo.fr

**Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Bâ**

Deputy Director  
Exploration and Production of Hydrocarbons  
Ministry of Petroleum, Energy and Mines  
Nouakchott, Mauritania  
Mobile: +222 36 31 29 16  
Email: seyidiba@yahoo.fr

**MOROCCO**

**Ms. Fatima El Aamili**

Head  
Petroleum and Alternative Supplies Department  
Directorate of Fuel  
Ministry of Energy, Minerals and Sustainable  
Development  
Rabat, Morocco  
Tel: +212 537 688 764  
Email: f.elaamili@mem.gov.ma

**Ms. Halima Lessiq**

Head of Costs and Tariffs Studies;  
Member of Management Unit  
GEF-Transport Project  
Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and  
Water  
Rabat, Morocco  
Tel: +212 5 380 00 5002  
Email: h.lessiq@mtpnet.gov.ma

**Ms. Saloua Moujahid**

Head  
Natural Gas Service  
Ministry of Energy, Minerals and Sustainable  
Development  
Rabat, Morocco  
Tel: +212 537 688 457  
Email: s.moujahid@mem.gov.ma

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

### **Ms. Fleur Stevens**

Regional Advisory on Water and Energy  
Embassy of The Netherlands  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 59 02 232  
Email: fleur.stevens@minbuza.nl

### **Ms. Tessa Terpstra**

MENA Regional Envoy for Water and Energy  
Security  
Embassy of the Netherlands  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 5902232  
Fax: +962 6 5930214  
Email: tessa.terpstra@minbuza.nl

## **OMAN**

### **Ms. Souad Al-Fadhil**

Director  
General Secretariat  
Supreme Council of Planning  
Muscat, Oman  
Tel: +968 242 97 455  
Email: sfadhel@scp.gov.om  
suadfadhel61@hotmail.com

## **STATE OF PALESTINE**

### **Ms. Salam Abuhantash**

Section Head  
Surface Water Harvesting  
Water Resources Department  
Palestinian Water Authority  
Ramallah, State of Palestine  
Tel: +970 22 987 665  
Email: shantash@pws.ps

### **Mr. Abdulhadi Barakat**

Projects Monitoring Unit Director  
Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources  
Authority  
Ramallah, Palestine  
Tel: +972 22 984 752  
Email: abarakat@menr.org

### **Mr. Nedal Katbeh-Badr**

Minister's Advisor for Climate Change  
UNFCCC National Focal Point  
IPCC National Focal Point  
Environmental Quality Authority  
Ramallah, State of Palestine  
Tel: +970 2 240 3495  
Fax: +970 2 240 3494  
Email: n72065@hotmail.com

### **Mr. Mohammad Tbaileh**

Vice Director General of Planning and Studies  
Ministry of Transport  
Ramallah, State of Palestine  
Tel: + 962 65 803 060  
Email: mtubaileh@mot.gov.ps

### **Mr. Bassel Yasin**

Renewable Energy Director  
Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources  
Authority  
Ramallah, State of Palestine  
Email: byaseen@penra.pna.ps

## **SUDAN**

### **Mr. Hamad Al Shareif**

Director General  
General Direction of Policies and Research  
Ministry of Transport  
Khartoum, Sudan  
Tel: +249 18 378 1949  
Fax: +249 18 378 1949  
Email: hamadalsharief@gmail.com

### **Ms. Arig Bakhiet**

Energy and Climate Change Specialist  
Higher Council for Environment and Natural  
Resources  
Khartoum, Sudan  
Tel: +249 915 302 185  
Email: arigplus@gmail.com

## SWEDEN

### **Ms. Katrin Aidnell**

Regional Programme Manager  
(environment, climate change, water, renewable  
energy and food security)  
Embassy of Sweden  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 65 90 1300  
Email: katrin.aidnell@gov.se

## SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

### **Mr. Khaled Alelij**

Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
Tel: +963 11 316 5040  
Email: depo@mopmr.gov.sy

### **Ms. Nabela Nabaa**

Director of Planning and International  
Cooperation  
Ministry of Transportation  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
Tel: +963 11 332 0625  
Fax: +963 11 334 1076  
Email: n.nabaah@gmail.com

### **Mr. Basel Kamal Eddin**

Deputy General Director  
General Commission for Water Resources  
Ministry of Water Resources  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
Tel: +963 11 441 0398  
Fax: +963 11 442 1965  
Email: baselkd@gmail.com

### **Mr. Nedal Karmoucheh**

Assistant Minister  
Ministry of Electricity  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
Tel: +963 214 3655  
Fax: +963 213 3954  
Email: karshned@yahoo.com

## TUNISIA

### **Mr. Hassen Lotfi Frigui**

Director General  
Water Resources Directorate  
Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and  
Fishing  
Tunis, Tunisia  
Email: hfrigui@yahoo.fr

### **Mr. Fethi Hanchi**

Technical Central Director  
National Agency for Energy Conservation  
Ministry of Industry and SMEs  
Tunis, Tunisia  
Tel: +216 71 904 914  
Fax: +216 71 904 624  
Email: hanchi.fethi@anme.nat.tn

### **Mr. Wissem Mahjoub**

Director General  
Logistics and Multimodal Transport  
Ministry of Transport  
Tunis, Tunisia  
Tel: +216 971 42812  
Email: wissem.mahjoub@mt.gov.tn

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

### **Ms. Fatma AlFalasi**

Sustainability Engineer  
Future Energy and Supply Security Department  
Ministry of Energy and Industry  
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Email: fatma.alfalasi@moei.gov.ae

### **Ms. Fatima Alsaffar**

Assistant Legal Researcher  
Electricity and Energy Legislation Section  
Ministry of Energy and Industry  
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Email: Fatimah.Alsaffar@moei.gov.ae

## **YEMEN**

### **Ms. Amani Zabara**

Director-General for International Economic Studies  
Economic Studies and Forecasts Sector  
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation  
Aden, Yemen  
Email: azabara.zabara@gmail.com

## **EXPERTS**

### **Mr. Deeb Abdel Ghafour**

Senior Water Resource Engineer  
Ramallah, State of Palestine  
Email: deeb\_saleh2003@yahoo.com

### **Mr. Menouer Boughedaoui**

Professor  
University of Blida  
Blida, Algeria  
Tel/Fax: +213 25 231 611  
Email: boughedaoui@gmail.com

### **Mr. Bashar Zeitoun**

Advisor in Sustainable Development  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 5518255  
Email: bzeitoun@gmail.com

## **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL**

## **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **APEX CONSEIL**

#### **Mr. Samir Amous**

CEO  
APEX Conseil  
Tunis, Tunisia  
Tel: +216 71947092  
Fax: +216 71947144  
Email: amous.apex@gnet.tn

## **ALCOR**

### **Mr. Rafik Missaoui**

Owner  
Alcor  
Tunis, Tunisia  
Tel: +216 71 234 854  
Fax: +216 71 234 857  
Email: alcor@alcor.com.tn

## **CEDARE**

### **Mr. Ahmed El-Dorghamy**

Energy and Environment Expert  
Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +20 22 259 8059  
Email: adorghamy@cedare.int

## **INTEGRAL CONSULT**

### **Mr. Amr Osama Abdel-Aziz**

President  
INTEGRAL Consult  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +20 2 2520 4515  
Fax: +20 2 2520 4514  
Email: amorosama@integral-egypt.com

### **Mr. Ahmad Wafik**

Technical Manager  
INTEGRAL Consult  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +20 2 2520 4515  
Fax: +20 2 2520 4514  
Email: awafik@integral-egypt.com

## **IRAQ ENERGY INSTITUTE**

### **Mr. Anas Al-Gburi**

Business Development Manager  
Iraq Energy Institute  
Baghdad, Iraq  
Tel: +964 7817774455  
Email: anas@iraqenergy.org



## **LCEC**

### **Ms. Patil Mesrobian**

Programme Development Officer  
Environmental Specialist  
Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel: + 961 1 565108  
Fax: + 961 1 569101  
Email: patil.mesrobian@lcecp.org.lb

## **REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **EBRD**

#### **Mr. Gianpiero Nacci**

Deputy Head  
Energy Efficiency and Climate Change  
Department  
European Bank for Reconstruction and  
Development  
London, United Kingdom  
Email: NacciG@ebrd.com

### **EUROPEAN UNION**

#### **Mr. Omar Abu-Eid**

Program Manager  
Energy Environment and Climate Change  
Delegation of the European Union to the  
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 4607000, ext.141  
Email: omar.abu-eid@eeas.europa.eu

#### **Mr. Emil Alasis**

Team Leader  
EU Technical Assistance to the  
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency  
Program in Jordan (REEE II)  
Amman, Jordan  
Email: emil.alasis@gfa-group.de  
alasis@gmail.com

### **Ms. Amel Mrad Bida**

EU Technical Assistance to the  
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency  
Program in Jordan (REEE II)  
Amman, Jordan  
Email: Amel.Bida@gfa-group.de

### **GIZ**

#### **Ms. Navina Sanchez**

Climate Change Policy Advisor  
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH  
Amman, Jordan  
Email: navina.sanchez@giz.de

### **LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES**

#### **Mr. Djameleddine Djaballah**

Director  
Environment, Housing and Water Resources  
Department  
League of Arab States  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +202 257 50 511  
Fax: +202 257 43 023  
Email: djamel.djaballah@las.int

#### **Mr. Mahmoud Fathallah**

Counsellor (Senior Economist)  
Energy Department  
League of Arab States  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +202 257 50 511, ext. 3614  
Fax: +202 257 43 023  
Email: mahmoud.fathallah@las.int

#### **Mr. Hammou Laamrani**

Senior Integrated Expert  
Housing and Water Resources Department  
Economic Sector  
League of Arab States  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +202 2575 0511  
Fax: +202 257 43 023  
Email: hammou.laamrani@cimonline.de

**Ms. Aya Sobhy**

Communications and Outreach Coordinator  
Energy Department  
League of Arab States  
Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +20 2 257 50 511, ext. 3665  
Fax: +20 2 257 40 331  
Email: aya.sobhy@las.int

**SLOCAT****Mr. Christopher Dekki** (via video link)

Senior Associate, Policy Advocacy and  
Outreach  
Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon  
Transport (SLoCaT)  
New York City, USA  
Email: chris.dekki@slocatpartnership.org

**Mr. Karl Peet** (via recording)

Sustainable Transport Research Director  
Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon  
Transport (SLoCaT)  
Chicago, USA  
Email: karl.peet@slocatpartnership.org

**NDC PARTNERSHIP****Mr. Awwad Salameh**

Senior Advisor  
NDC Partnership Support Unit  
based at Ministry of Environment  
Amman, Jordan  
Email: Awwad.Salameh@ndcpartnership.org

**UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS****UNDP****Ms. Iulia Isaeva**

Regional Climate Change Specialist  
Regional Hub for Arab States  
United Nations Development Programme  
Amman, Jordan  
Email: iulia.isaeva@undp.org

**Ms. Sujala Pant**

Chief Technical Advisory/Project Manager  
SDGs-Climate Facility Project  
Regional Hub for Arab States  
United Nations Development Programme  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 6 200 3179  
Email: sujala.pant@undp.org

**Mr. Dustin Schinn**

Regional Climate Change Specialist  
SDGs-Climate Facility Project  
Regional Hub for Arab States  
United Nations Development Programme  
Amman, Jordan  
Email: dustin.schinn@undp.org

**Mr. Asif Shah** (via video link)

Regional Public Finance Management Expert  
United Nations Development Programme  
Islamabad, Pakistan  
Mobile: +92 300 8274646  
Email: asif.shah@undp.org

**UNFCCC****Mr. Yolando Velasco** (via video link)

Manager  
Climate Finance Sub-Programme  
Finance, Technology and Capacity Building  
Programme  
United Nations Framework Convention on  
Climate Change Secretariat  
Bonn, Germany  
Tel: +49 228 815 1414  
Email: yvalasco@unfccc.int

**UN-HABITAT****Ms. Deema Abu Thiab**

National Programme Coordinator – Jordan  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 799 122 223, ext. 201  
Fax: +962 799 222 216  
Email: deema.abuthiab@un.org

## **WHO/CEHA**

### **Mr. Ahmad Basel Al-Yousfi**

Director  
Regional Centre for Environmental Health  
Action  
World Health Organization  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 65 100 651  
Fax: +962 65 516 591  
Email: alyousfia@who.int

### **Ms. Rola Al-Emam**

Technical Officer  
Occupational Health and Waste Management  
Regional Centre for Environmental Health  
Action  
World Health Organization  
Amman, Jordan  
Tel: +962 65 100 676  
Fax: +962 65 516 591  
Email: alemamr@who.int

## **ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK (ISDB)**

### **Mr. Ahmed Al Qabany**

Manager  
Climate Change Division  
Resilience and Social Development Department  
Islamic Development Bank  
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia  
Tel: +966 12 636 1400  
Email: AAlQabany@isdb.org

### **Mr. Haruna Kachalla Gujba**

Climate Change Specialist  
Climate Change Division  
Resilience and Social Development Department  
Islamic Development Bank  
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Tel: +966 12 646 6878  
Fax: +966 12 637 1334  
Email: hgujba@isdb.org

### **Mr. Abdoulie Jallow**

Lead Economist  
Islamic Development Bank  
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Tel: +966 12 636 1400  
Email: ajallow@isdb.org

### **Mr. Moncef Soudani**

Senior Reverse Linkage Specialist  
Regional Coordinator (MENA and Europe)  
Reverse Linkage Team  
Islamic Development Bank  
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Tel: +966 12 646 1400  
Fax: +966 12 637 1334  
Email: msoudani@isdb.org

## **UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)**

### **Ms. Roula Majdalani**

Director  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 502  
Email: majdalani@un.org

### **Ms. Carol Chouchani Cherfane**

Chief  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 518  
Email: chouchanicherfane@un.org

### **Ms. Radia Sedaoui**

Chief  
Energy Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 527  
Email: sedaoui@un.org

### **Ms. Reem Nejdawi**

Chief  
Food and Environment Policies Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 558  
Email: nejdawi@un.org

### **Mr. Yarob Badr**

Regional Advisor on Transport and Logistics  
Economic Development and Integration Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 429  
Email: badr3@un.org

**Ms. Denise Sumpf** (via video link)  
Chief, a.i.  
Economic Governance and Planning Section  
Economic Development and Integration  
Division  
ESCWA  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel: +961 1 978 432  
Email: sumpf@un.org

**Mr. Mongi Bida**  
First Economic Affairs Officer  
Energy Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 526  
Email: bida@un.org

**Ms. Marlene Tomaszkiwicz**  
Regional Advisor for Climate Change Analysis  
using Geographic Information System Tools  
Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 584  
Email: tomaszkiwicz@un.org

**Mr. Ziad Khayat**  
First Economic Affairs Officer  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 517  
Mobile: +961 3 387 771  
Email: khayat@un.org

**Mr. Daniel Griswold**  
Associate Economic Affairs Officer  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 521  
Email: daniel.griswold@un.org

**Ms. Joelle Comair**  
Associate Programme Officer  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 580  
Email: comair@un.org

**Ms. Dima Kharbotli**  
Research Assistant  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 575  
Email: kharbotli@un.org

**Ms. Zoubaida Ziadeh**  
Senior Assistant  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel: +961 1 978 855  
Email: ziadeh@un.org

**Mr. El Hadi Radwan**  
Research Assistant  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 569  
Email: radwan@un.org

**Mr. Ahmad Diab**  
Research Assistant  
Energy Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Tel: +961 1 978 534  
Email: ahmad.diab@un.org