



Preparatory Meeting on the Regional Environmental Issues and Priorities for AFSD Semiramis Hotel, Cairo, Egypt, 23-24 April 2017

Information Note

1- Background

The Arab Forum on Sustainable Development

Since 2014, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has been cooperating with regional partners in the yearly organization of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD), to support regional preparations for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The 2017 session of the AFSD will be organized from 3 to 5 May 2017 in Morocco. Its outcomes will feed into the 2017 HLPF session, to be convened in New York during the period from 10 to 19 July 2017 under the theme “Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing World”.

The cooperation between ESCWA, the United Nations Environment (UNEP), the League of Arab States, and the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) has contributed greatly to the success of the previous AFSD sessions. Moreover, the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) has actively participated in the AFSD, being one of the LAS bodies responsible for the environmental dimensions of sustainable development. CAMRE’s active involvement in the AFSD preparatory process builds on its ongoing support to the Arab countries in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Stemming from its commitment to highlight the environmental dimension of sustainable development in all regional fora, CAMRE adopted a resolution during its 28th regular session which:

- *“calls on the Technical Secretariat of CAMRE, in cooperation and coordination with ESCWA and UN Environment /Regional Office for West Asia to prepare an implementation plan for the environmental dimension of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.” (Res 495, para. 2)*
- *“calls on the Technical Secretariat of CAMRE, in cooperation and coordination with ESCWA and UN Environment Regional Office for West Asia to hold a preparatory meeting on the regional environmental issues and priorities present on the agenda of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD) in 2017.” (Res 495, para. 8)*

Box 1. The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the importance of regional contributions

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was established in accordance with the Rio+20 outcome document to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development. It also serves as a platform to follow up and review progress on the implementation of sustainable development commitments. In its resolution 67/290 adopted on 9 July 2013 regarding the format and organizational aspects of the HLPF, the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and invited the five United Nations Regional Commissions, including ESCWA, to contribute to the work of the Forum through annual regional meetings. In accordance with this mandate, and ESCWA has since 2014 organized the Arab Forums on Sustainable Development (AFSD) in cooperation with UNEP, the League of Arab States and other partners. The 2016 Forum was organized in Amman from 29 to 30 May 2016.

AFSD sessions help in stimulating discussion between concerned governmental and non-governmental parties at the highest levels, assessing the status of sustainable development in the Arab region, and exchanging views regarding the particular challenges facing the region and means to address them. The outcomes of the AFSD are submitted as regional inputs to the HLPF, thus helping to highlight Arab regional perspectives and to incorporate regional specificities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The countries decided that the theme for the 2017 HLPF will be "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world". The set of goals to be reviewed during this session are listed below, noting that Goal 17 will be considered every year:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven". These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by HLPF, which is convened under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). These voluntary national reviews (VNRs) aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. For 2017, two countries of the Arab region: Jordan and Qatar, are presenting their VNRs, after Egypt and Morocco who submitted reports last year.

More information on the AFSD and the HLPF can be obtained from the following websites:

2016 Session of the AFSD: <https://www.unescwa.org/arab-forum-sustainable-development-2016>

HLPF: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

In April 2016, ESCWA, in partnership with UN Environment and the League of Arab States' secretariat (as the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR)'s Technical Secretariat) organized the "Preparatory Meeting for the AFSD and the United Nations Environment Assembly" which resulted in an outcome document presented to the 2016 AFSD and UNEA 2. Based on the successful outcome of highlighting environmental issues, and in preparation for the 2017 session of the AFSD, ESCWA, in partnership with UN Environment and the League of Arab States' Secretariat, is organizing the "Preparatory Meeting on the Regional Environmental Issues and Priorities for AFSD" from 23 to 24 April 2017 in Cairo, Egypt.

2- Objectives and themes of the meeting

This preparatory meeting aims to highlight the importance of the environmental dimension in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The meeting will highlight the significance of natural resources sustainability to maintain the livelihoods of the poor- specifically for the rural poor, women and refugees- ensuring their access to water, energy and land, and ultimately their food security. The meeting's outcome will be presented as the contribution of CAMRE, the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), the Council of Arab Ministers for Meteorology and Climate (CAMMAC), & the Arab Ministerial Council for Housing and Construction (AMCHAC) to the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD). In order to best support the region's contributions to this important regional forum, the meeting will mirror in its scope the themes of the 2017 HLPF.

The meeting will have the following specific objectives:

- Exchange perspectives and priorities on sustaining the natural resources base in the Arab region and implementing the 2030 agenda in general and SDGs 1 and 2 on poverty eradication and food security in particular, namely: “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”, and “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture”;
- Address impacts of the regional context and specificities on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs 1 and 2 in particular given the prevailing conflict in certain countries and the resulting displacement;
- Review the framework for integrating the environmental and natural resources dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into the themes and priorities of environment and natural resources in the Arab region, which would help the 2030 Agenda's implementation. This framework is being prepared by ESCWA, UN Environment and the League of Arab States;
- Engage participants in a dialogue on the proposed future steps, and the adequate regional and national institutional frameworks, to monitor and review the goals and targets that have an environmental and natural resources dimension including energy, water, and Land. In this regard, the meeting will benefit from the insight of the Arab countries volunteering to make national reviews during the 2017 HLPF (Jordan and Qatar).

The meeting will result in a report that includes a set of key messages, conclusions and recommendations reflecting the participants' views on the issues under consideration. The report will be submitted to the 2017 AFSD in which CAMRE will be actively participating.

3- Participants

Member country representatives to the JCEDAR will be invited to the meeting, in addition to concerned regional institutions members of JCEDAR, in addition to relevant experts.

Participants necessitating sponsorship are kindly requested to submit a fully completed registration form to ESCWA before 13 March 2017, to allow enough time for logistical arrangements.

4- Logistical issues

Date and venue: The meeting will be held at the Semiramis Hotel in Cairo, Egypt from 23 to 24 April 2017.

Languages: Arabic and English are the official languages of the Meeting. Simultaneous interpretation between both languages will be provided.

Travel: ESCWA or UN Environment will issue the tickets for sponsored participants. Participants attending the meeting at their own expense need to make their own travel arrangements.

Accommodation: Participants are asked to make their own hotel arrangements. A block reservation has been made at the Semiramis hotel in Cairo at a preferential room rate of 135USD/night for a single room, inclusive of breakfast and all taxes. Interested participants are requested to reserve with the hotel directly using the following e-mail: Shady.elhamy@ihg.com, copying: Mohamed.tawfik@ihg.com, kindly make reference to the meeting in your email.

5- Correspondence

All correspondence related to the meeting must be directed to the following addresses:

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