



Distr.  
LIMITED  
10 February 2017  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

“Advancing Green Technologies through Science-Policy Interface”  
Expert Group Meeting (UN House, Beirut, Lebanon 5-6 April 2017)

### **INFORMATION NOTE**

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

The Arab region faces a unique combination of interlinked environmental, social, economic and governance challenges. Challenges include unsustainable consumption of water, energy and other natural resources as well as increasing inequality, unemployment and poverty. Many of these complex challenges can be efficiently addressed if approached holistically; using science and technology based innovative solutions.

The UN highlighted that in order to reorient current unsustainable development trajectories over the period 2015 to 2030, affordable and practical technological solutions have to be developed, transferred and applied widely in the next fifteen years. So far, technological readiness in the Arab countries remains below the average level of the world. Despite investments in education and scientific research infrastructure and human resources, these countries continue to purchase turnkey technological products rather than adequately rooting technology locally. This situation represents a lost opportunity for the local economy. Modern green technologies offer a chance to leapfrog and deploy local scientific and technological capacity in economic development while reducing adverse effects on the environment. Transitioning towards green technologies allows efficient natural resources consumption and improved productivity in agriculture, business and industrial processes. This ultimately supports creating decent jobs for the educated youth.

Among the main causes that deprive the Arab countries from effectively deploying technological solutions and scientific discoveries are the wide gap between universities and local economy, inadequate levels of funding and lack of private sector investment for research and development, incoherent national legislation and disconnected institutional policies as well as cultural and governance hurdles. Addressing these gaps requires effective and institutional communication channels and collaboration mechanisms among science, policy, society, and the market. Governments should establish policies creating a conducive environment for the promotion of effective technology transfer and innovation especially for promising green technology areas.

Science-policy interface is a means to channel scientific advice to policymakers to soundly base policy on science and meet society's needs. To this end, science-policy interface needs to be extended to include civil society and communities, businesses and industries. Such collaboration will create demand driven research and development, relevant innovation and promising employment prospects for youth within a conducive policy environment.

UN ESCWA is leading initiatives to institutionalize technology transfer and develop green production sectors and green technologies to improve livelihoods in rural areas. In 2012, UN ESCWA established a network of Green Help Desks in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia to further knowledge exchange on green technologies and support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with green economy opportunities. In 2015 the UN ESCWA Technology Center stepped up these efforts with a project establishing National Technology Transfer Offices in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia, which

aims at enhancing national innovation system capacity through reviewing legislations related to science, technology and innovation and linking research institutions with industry, governmental and non-governmental actors.

This Expert Group Meeting builds on UN ESCWA's previous activities and joins efforts of the stakeholders involved in these projects to enable scaled green technology development and applications towards the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this meeting is to highlight the important role of science-policy interface in supporting green technologies to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region.

Specifically, the meeting will aim to:

- Institutionalize a platform for scientists, policy-makers, civil society and the Arab technology industry to break down knowledge transfer barriers and foster future cooperation through national frameworks
- Gather expert advice on providing integrated and stable policies to create an enabling environment for green technology development and transfer
- Harmonize efforts between National Technology Transfer Offices and Green Help Desks to facilitate green technology development with national stakeholders and policymakers

## **III. THEMES**

The Expert Group Meeting will discuss the issues of advancing green technologies and science-policy interface throughout five sessions in the form of presentations and expert panel discussions. The discussions will revolve around the following themes:

- *Session 1* on Green Technology Opportunities for Sustainable Development will provide an introduction to green technology development in the Arab region in relation to the 2030 Agenda and innovation opportunities.
- *Session 2* on Productive National Technology Development and Transfer Systems will present the ESCWA Technology Centre's project that establishes the National Technology Transfer Offices (NTTO) in several Arab countries.
- *Session 3* on Barriers and Enablers for Sustainable Technology Development – Scientific Production, Institutions and Investment, aims to discuss current barriers to sustainable and green technology development, including scientific production, governance, institutions and the investment environment.
- *Session 4* will focus on the Science-Policy Interface for Sustainable Development, and will draw on examples from the region as well as globally on methods of knowledge and policy to interact.
- *Session 5* addresses Knowledge Development for Industrial Green Technologies, highlighting how we can strengthen the link between knowledge producers and the industry.
- *Session 6* showcases Successful Deployment of Green technologies: Path Forward with a panel discussion and practical examples from the energy, water, waste and agricultural field.

## **IV. PARTICIPANTS**

The meeting will bring together representatives of the four main groups in the science-policy interface: scientists, policy-makers, civil society, and industrialists. Meeting participants will thus include representatives from the national Green Help Desks (GHD), National Technology Transfer Offices (NTTO),

relevant ministries, academia, research institutions, industry, NGOs and partner UN Agencies. In addition, the meeting will include inputs from international experts on the main topics of the meeting.

## V. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting is organized by ESCWA and will be held at the UN House in Beirut 5-6 April 2017. Participants are kindly requested to arrive at 8:30 am on 5 April 2017 to register for the meeting, which will promptly start at 9:00 am. The working language of the meeting is Arabic with simultaneous interpretation to English.

## VI. LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

Participants are kindly requested to return completed registration form to ESCWA together with a scanned passport photograph. Outside participants should submit their registration form to ESCWA no later than 22 February 2017 to allow time for necessary travel arrangements. Sponsorship cannot be assured for registration forms received beyond that date. Participants are responsible for securing their own visa for travel to Lebanon.

## VII. CORRESPONDENCE

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