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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
The 5th ESCWA Technology Center's Technical Committee Meeting
Beirut -Lebanon, 23-24 May 2017

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

Since its establishment in 2010, ESCWA Technology Centre has been assisting the member countries to harness science and technology for enhancing their socio-economic development, and establishing their national technology development and transfer systems. In 2016, in support of addressing the challenges of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development which was launched in late 2015, ETC developed a responsive work plan targeted towards assisting the member countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Furthermore, in 2017 ETC is committed for the following expected accomplishments within the overall objectives to mainstream the global sustainable development agenda into regional and national policy processes and programs:

1. To map, analyze and improve the national technology development and transfer landscape system components and relevant legislations to obtain a more productive and legal framework that is more coherent in support of more inclusive economic development;
2. To strengthen the scientific content of various critical economic sectors with selective contributions related to adequate technologies for food security, green development, sustainable energy and water resources enforcing the socio-economic resilience in Member countries;
3. To facilitate regional cooperation in research, development and innovation addressing challenges in identified regional sustainable development priorities like Water, Energy, Food security and adaptation to and mitigation of Climate Change.

This meeting will be held in accordance with the ETC Statute to give guidance to the Centre on its future work plan and technical issues that relate to its work, and to identify member countries' priorities and challenges in harnessing national capabilities in science, technology, and innovation in the implementation of the sustainable development goals.

II. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the meeting are:

1. To identify priority themes for applied research and innovation and developing collaborative platform that would actively engage ETC stakeholders in the Arab Region.
2. To determine the opportunities for partnerships development in the implementation of ETC work-program.
3. To identify key priority areas in the region where Science & Technology would be a game changer for achieving sustainable development.

III. THEMES FOR THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

The main themes that will be discussed during the meeting sessions are:

1. **Priorities for Effective National Technology Transfer Systems**

In most Arab countries major efforts have been implemented towards harnessing science and technology for local sustainable development. However, the return has been below expectations, and missing links are blocking the productive system at national levels. The situation is different from one country to another even though we find similarities among clusters of countries. The aim of the session is to identify major gaps and discuss opportunities for bridging these gaps for scaling up the role of STI in facilitating sustainable development. In particular, the session will address the following questions:

- ✓ What are the major hurdles blocking commercialization of research outcomes in Arab countries? (policies, funding, human resources, infrastructure, ...)
- ✓ Where are the relevant legislative gaps and which corrective measures can bring more coherence to the legislative system?
- ✓ How can the private sector be more effectively engaged in local R&D? (university-industry relations, technology transfer offices, incentives, ...)

2. **Emerging Technologies (ET) that are Adequate for Sustainable Development in the Arab Countries**

The emerging technologies have become multidisciplinary by nature addressing effectively challenges in all areas globally. The priorities of sustainable development challenges in the Arab countries offer unique opportunities to leapfrog into applying emerging technologies in the era of open science, education, research and tools. Despite abundance of proven local capacity and open access to knowledge, the challenge remains how to determine the most adequate emerging technologies that can contribute to social wellbeing, economic growth and job creation, while safeguarding the sustainable management of natural resources. Specifically, this session will address the following questions:

- ✓ How can we accelerate the transformation of experimental research from local labs to local society and economy? (FDI, MNC, partnerships, ...)
- ✓ Which ET has been successfully rooted in Arab countries? (Nanotech, biotech, ICT, artificial intelligence, robotics, ...)
- ✓ How can we build a critical mass from existing islands of excellence? (knowledge platform, open innovation, co-funding mechanisms,..)

3. **ETC Potential Role in Promoting Green Technologies**

The concept of green technologies has been widely accepted and promoted globally. However, there is no consensus on the criteria of qualifying technologies as green uniformly. Therefore, in Arab countries there is a need to localize the characteristics of green technologies especially in the region known for water stress, food insecurity, unequal distribution of energy resources, and climate fragility. This session aims to answer the following questions:

- ✓ What are the criteria of green technology in local context? (emissions, efficiency, costs, recycling, consumption patterns, ...)
- ✓ How can green technologies enable the nexus approach towards achieving water, energy, and food security? (tradeoffs vs integrated)
- ✓ How can climate resilient technologies improve the capacity of Arab countries to deliver on their commitments to the Paris Agreement?

4. **Business Opportunities in Solving the Sustainable Development Challenges**

Local sustainable development needs may offer lucrative business opportunities with wide markets through applying scientific discoveries and innovative technologies. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) highlighted a clear path for deploying science, technology and innovation towards achieving the SDGs. A major track called for promoting

entrepreneurship, partnerships with MNC, innovation funds, and business incubators. These elements constitute the core pillars that can scale up innovative ideas and demonstrative research towards Private Purposeful Enterprises. This session will address:

- ✓ What are the local obstacles in attracting investments for innovation? (regulations, security and stability, culture and confidence, markets, ...)
- ✓ How can regional integration and complementarity support growth in technology startups?
- ✓ What are the lucrative opportunities in meeting sustainable development challenges in Arab countries? (water technology, renewable energy, waste recycling, food, ...)

5. ETC Proposed Focus areas 2018-2019

This session will distill outcomes from the previous sessions' discussions and offer an open platform for developing forward path for ETC. This concluding session should deliver priority themes for collaborative work among ETC stakeholders in the Arab countries, as well as opportunities for partnerships and resource mobilization.

IV. PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the meeting include technical experts from the region in various developed and emerging technologies, representing stakeholders from the academic and research institutions, industrial, public sector, and related UN organizations.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting is organized by ETC and will be held at the UN House in Beirut 23-24 May 2017. Participants are kindly requested to arrive at 8:30 am on 23 May 2017 to register for the meeting, which will promptly start at 9:00 am. The working language of the meeting is Arabic and English.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

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