



Outcome document of the Preparatory Meeting for the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development

*Held on 23-24 April 2017
At the Semiramis Hotel, Cairo-Egypt*

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The “Preparatory Meeting for the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development” was held on the 23rd and 24th of April 2017 at the Semiramis Hotel in Cairo, Egypt. The meeting was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the UN Environment. The meeting was attended by member country representatives to the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), in addition to representatives of a number of Arab, regional and international organizations, civil society representatives, and sustainable development experts.

The meeting examined the Arab region’s priorities with respect to the environmental dimension of the sustainable development goals, with a focus on natural resources’ management and its implications on reducing poverty and advancing prosperity. The meeting highlighted the importance of natural resources sustainability to maintain livelihoods of the poor- specifically the rural poor, women and refugees- ensuring their access to water, energy and land resources, and ultimately their food security.

The meeting resulted in the following set of key messages that stemmed from the discussions, to be submitted as the contribution of CAMRE, AMWC¹, CAMMAC², & AMCHAC³ to the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD), which will in turn submit its recommendations to the 2017 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Key messages

General Messages:

1. To affirm the importance of the sustainable management of natural resources to poverty eradication, and enhancing stability and prosperity. Natural resources indeed ensure the provision of ecological services, which in turn contribute to income generation, job creation, poverty alleviation, safety nets and inequality reduction.
2. To enhance sustainable investment which ensures the integration of the environmental dimension into national and local economic development, in addition to social and political stability. Also, highlight lost opportunities, and socio-economic costs of environmental degradation and pollution, and their negative impacts on national economies. Moreover, the need to structure implementation of the environmental dimension within an integrated framework that takes into account the socio-economic dimensions and specificities, challenges, and aspirations of the Arab region.

¹ Arab Ministerial Water Council.

² Council of Arab Ministers for Meteorology and Climate

³ Arab Ministerial Council for Housing and Construction

Access to Natural Resources:

1. To address the pressing environmental challenges for the Arab region, namely: water scarcity, climate change impacts, desertification and land degradation, marine environment pollution, low natural resources use efficiency, lack of proper access to energy services including renewable energy; given their direct impact on poverty reduction.
2. To ensure access of rural poor populations, particularly women to land, improved water and sanitation services, as well as modern, sustainable and affordable energy services, in order to enhance and maintain sustainable livelihoods.
3. To realize that environment is the “silent victim” in countries suffering from conflict, and in cities and countries receiving refugees and the displaced. The cost of conflict contributes to increased poverty and competition over natural resources, thus exacerbating tensions and instability.
4. To emphasize the high environment cost resulting from occupation on direct environmental degradation, which weakens sustainable development, and limits the benefits from natural resources investments, due to imposed restrictions and limitations on Palestinian economy and livelihood.

Institutional Framework:

1. To realize that the SDGs cannot be effectively achieved without integrating the environmental dimension into socio-economic national development strategies in a balanced manner, while guided by the “Arab Strategic Framework on Sustainable Development”.
2. To assess the work modalities of Arab institutions, and enhance their roles in line with the implementation requirements of the 2030 Agenda, including monitoring and reporting.
3. To reinforce the political will to secure the harmonization of integrated policies and institutional frameworks and structures, and enhance political skills through linking policies to knowledge, science, and technology, and attributing a major role on accountability to societies.
4. To emphasize the development of an implementation framework for the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, based on the “Arab Strategic Framework on Sustainable Development” and Arab priority issues.
5. To recognize the role that multilateral environmental agreements can play in providing the international legal frameworks for national policy development in support of the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda.
6. To ensure the active participation of Arab countries in the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) through a unified Arab position regarding the UNEA major theme “A world free from pollution”, in addition to their participation in the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Means of Implementation:

a- Financing and Global Partnerships:

1. To emphasize the role of the private sector, civil society organizations, financial institutions and stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs, with emphasis on provision of environmental services, using innovative technologies that will create new job opportunities and reduce inequalities.
2. To reaffirm the role of the banking system in financing the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, and the associated development of legislative and institutional frameworks to enhance related partnerships, a pre-requisite to this being the provision of political will and benefiting from success stories.
3. To recognize and enhance the role of partnerships as a means of implementation, engaging with Arab think-tanks and research institutions to provide the conducive environment for science-based policy making.

b- Regional Cooperation:

1. To emphasize the importance of sharing Arab expertise and benefiting from other regional experiences in integrating and implementing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, and in the frameworks for monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Agenda.
2. To reaffirm the need for joint Arab efforts to reduce environmental pollution in all its forms (water, air and soil) and stress the importance of the health-environment nexus.
3. To recognize the need for regional cooperation to enhance green economy and innovative green investments, and innovative sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Arab region, and the associated spillover on employment creation.
4. To realize the importance of involving the whole spectrum of society- from governmental institutions, non-governmental institutions, private sector, civil society, media and other stakeholders- in the whole process of identifying priorities and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and monitoring and reporting.

c- Data and Technology

1. To reiterate the importance of data collection and processing, information sharing, integrated indicators' setting and capacity building at national and regional levels to enable adequate monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs, and benefiting from existing programs in this area.
2. To realize the important role of education, scientific research and innovative technologies in informing and developing policies and decision-making regarding the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.