

# **Outcome document of the Preparatory Meeting for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2<sup>nd</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly**

*Thursday 14 April 2016  
UN House, Beirut – Lebanon*

The Preparatory Meeting for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2<sup>nd</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly was held on Thursday April 14, 2016 at the UN house in Beirut. The meeting was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the League of Arab States' Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The meeting was attended by member country representatives to the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), in addition to a number of regional and international organizations members of JCEDAR.

The meeting examined the Arab region's priorities with respect to the goals related to environment and natural resources' management in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the impacts of the regional context on the implementation of these goals in the Arab region, based on the results of the First Edition of the Arab Sustainable Development Report. The meeting also discussed the means of "ensuring that no one is left behind" in the Arab region, "delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and securing "healthy environment, healthy people." Participants exchanged views and national experiences in monitoring and reviewing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to environment and natural resources' management.

The meeting resulted in the following set of key messages and recommendations that participants agreed to submit to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, which will submit its recommendations to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and to the 2<sup>nd</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

## **A. General recommendations**

1. To recall that development is a human right to be enjoyed by all, particularly by the most marginalized and the most vulnerable, including children, youth, persons with special needs and the elderly; and to affirm national sovereignty over natural resources and the need to ensure access of all countries to sustainable development, in particular for countries suffering from conflict, war and unilaterally imposed embargo.
2. To recognize the need for an effective regional institutional framework for sustainable development that includes the following important elements: a) a regional mechanism for follow up and review that adopts a shared vision and a shared approach to measuring sustainable development, to be elaborated by the Arab Working Group on Sustainable Development Indicators. The mechanism includes: a) an Arab information system to track indicators and a periodic Arab Sustainable Development Report; b) an Arab financing strategy that promotes regional economic and financial cooperation; c) a mechanism for regional technological cooperation supporting the transition to a knowledge economy.
3. To call on the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development to provide technical support to Arab countries conducting voluntary national reviews for the HLPF, and to facilitate the exchange of experiences in this regard.

4. To recognize the importance of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and to request from ESCWA and UNEP, being the highest-level body entrusted with mainstreaming the environmental dimension in sustainable development, to integrate the environmental dimension in all the sessions of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, and to allocate a standing agenda item in the Forum to deliberate on environment and natural resources' issues of interest to the Arab region.
5. To recognize that most challenges related to the environment and natural resources in the Arab region are due to weak institutions, governance and means of implementation; and underline the importance of strengthening the principles of good governance, in particular transparency, accountability through national regulatory bodies, the rule of law, and community participation including by civil society organizations, to support the achievement of sustainable development in the Arab region. We also call for adopting an integrated approach in planning, implementation and follow-up, improving coordination mechanisms, using modern decision-support tools, and enhancing the science – policy interface.
6. To reaffirm the principles set forth in the Rio Declaration (1992), in particular principle seven related to common but differentiated responsibilities between States; and invite Arab countries to benefit from international sources of green finance, green economy, and global mechanisms that facilitate the transfer of green technologies, in particular those contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation; and call on ESCWA and UNEP to build the capacities of Arab countries in this area.

## **B. Ensuring that no one is left behind**

7. To emphasize that people under occupation should not be left behind, and reaffirm the need to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands, which constitutes a major impediment to sustainable development in the Arab region. We also call for considering ways to operationalize Rio principle 23 on the protection of the environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation, as well as paragraph 35 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and providing special support to people suffering from occupation and conflict to achieve all the sustainable development goals, and in particular those related to natural resources' sustainability.
8. To emphasize the need to devote special attention to refugees and displaced persons, in view of the threats to their human dignity and mental and physical safety, and underline the importance of protecting their food security, notwithstanding that sustainable development goal number 2 did not refer to food security in time of conflicts and war. We also call on the international community to assume their responsibilities in supporting refugee hosting States, by enhancing their resilience and capacity to maintain the sustainability of their natural resources.
9. To emphasize the need to ensure access of rural populations, particularly small farmers and food producers, to improved water and sanitation services as well as modern, sustainable and affordable energy services, using the technologies that are most appropriate to their rural context and lifestyle.
10. To call on the international community to fulfill its commitments under sustainable development goal number 17, in particular with regard to facilitating technology transfer and the mobilization of financial resources in support of the least-developed and middle-income countries.
11. To emphasize that people living in border zones, slums and informal urban settlements have the right to development, and the need to adopt environmental policies that support local communities living in sensitive natural areas such as natural reserves, given their role as guardians of these natural resources.

### **C. Healthy environment, healthy people**

12. To underline the need to protect the health and safety of all, and the natural environment from pollution of all sources and types, giving particular attention to local communities living in pollution hotspots in the Arab region, such as regions affected by industrial pollution and unsustainable waste management practices.
13. To welcome the overarching theme of UNEA-2 (“Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”) and its thematic focus (“ Healthy Environment, Healthy People”), and invite the Arab States to participate in the high-level segment and present regional priorities at the national and regional levels.
14. To invite all Arab States to support the resolutions proposed by Arab States, in particular, the resolution to assess the effects of the wars on Gaza and the environmental impacts of conflicts and wars and their repercussions on neighboring countries; the resolution proposed by Jordan concerning the protection of the environment and natural resources in refugee-hosting countries; the resolution proposed by Sudan on combating desertification; and the resolution proposed by Egypt on water basins; and to invite the Arab States to express their views regarding other resolutions of interest to the region, such as the illegal trade in wildlife, sustainable consumption and production, and marine litter. We also call upon Arab States to support Iraq's candidacy to the Bureau of UNEA.
15. To invite delegations to actively participate in UNEA-2 side events, in particular those organized by the League of Arab States/CAMRE Technical Secretariat in cooperation with ESCWA and UNEP.
16. To invite CAMRE in cooperation with UNEP to follow-up on the implementation of UNEA resolutions.
17. To invite the League of Arab States and its members to request from UNEA and UNEP to further strengthen UNEP's regional presence by developing human capacity in their offices to cover all priority areas, and improving coordination mechanisms between the West Asia and Africa regions in meetings and activities of the Arab region.