

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

Committee on Water Resources
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Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019
in the field of water resources****Summary**

The proposed programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of water resources presents a set of activities and outputs related to the implementation of the expected accomplishments envisaged under subprogramme 1 on the integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development of the ESCWA strategic framework. While subprogramme 1 comprises work in the fields of energy, water resources, food and the environment, and is implemented by the ESCWA Sustainable Development Policies Division, this document contains only the proposed activities in the field of water resources, which are implemented by the Water Resources Section of the Sustainable Development Policies Division.

The Committee on Water Resources is invited to review the activities listed in the proposed programme of work and discuss the extent to which they meet the priorities of ESCWA member States and their relevance to the expected accomplishments in the field of water resources. The Committee is also invited to discuss ways to concretely measure the indicators of achievement to accurately monitor progress achieved as a result of implementing the proposed outputs.

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Introduction

1. The activities comprised in the proposed programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of water resources were formulated on the basis of subprogramme 1 on the integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development of the strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019, adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-ninth session (Doha, 13-15 December 2016).
2. The ESCWA Sustainable Development Policies Division is responsible for the implementation of subprogramme 1 through its three sections: the Water Resources Section, the Energy Section, and the Food and Environment Policies Section. During the biennium 2018-2019, the Division will maintain its focus on promoting regional and subregional cooperation on sustainable development in the fields of water resources, energy, food and the environment, and on assisting member States in harmonizing relevant policies and standards. The present document sets out the proposed outputs to be implemented by the Water Resources Section.
3. In preparing those outputs, the ESCWA secretariat has given due consideration to the following:
 - (a) Major challenges facing the Arab region, including issues that have emerged during the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015 and in 2016;
 - (b) The adoption by member States of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015 and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-first Conference of the Parties (Paris, December 2015), and the work underway to support their implementation through various means, including through a nexus approach;
 - (c) The challenges and priorities laid out in the Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region to Meet the Challenges and Future Needs for Sustainable Development 2010-2030 and its associated Action Plan adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council in June 2011 and July 2014, respectively;
 - (d) United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/169 of 17 December 2015 on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, which recognizes that the human right to safe drinking water entitles everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use, and that the human right to sanitation entitles everyone to have physical and affordable access to sanitation that is safe, hygienic, secure and socially and culturally acceptable, are components of the right to an adequate standard of living.

I. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE COMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES

4. The Committee on Water Resources is invited to review the proposed outputs and provide its guidance to the secretariat on the basis of the following two criteria: (a) the extent to which the proposed outputs respond to the needs of intended beneficiaries, namely ministries and authorities of the Arab region in charge of water resource issues; and (b) the extent to which those outputs contribute to the realization of the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 1, considering the outcome of the deliberations that will take place at the current session.

II. SUBPROGRAMME 1: INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. OBJECTIVE OF SUBPROGRAMME 1 FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019

5. The objective of subprogramme 1 is to support the integrated management of natural resources leading to improved food, water and energy security and enhanced resilience to climate change, and to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into regional and national policy processes.

B. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT

Expected accomplishments	Indicators of achievement
(a) Increased alignment of national plans with SDGs, drawing upon the nexus approach to water, energy and food	(a) (i) Increased number of multisectoral institutional mechanisms established to mainstream SDGs into national development plans (ii) Increased number of strategies, plans and policies adopted by line ministries to support the integrated management of natural resources
(b) Increased engagement by member States in regional and subregional processes in support of agreements, strategies and standards related to water, energy, food and the environment	(b) (i) Increased number of harmonized tools, techniques and guidelines implemented by member States to enhance food, water and energy security (ii) Increased number of joint initiatives and intergovernmental resolutions adopted to enhance regional cooperation on sustainability of natural resources
(c) Strengthened resilience of member States and of vulnerable communities to climate change and natural disasters	(c) (i) Increased number of intergovernmental recommendations, resolutions and decrees adopted by member States across sectors to coordinate responses to climate change and adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction measures (ii) Increased number of measures adopted by member States to mainstream the science-policy interface in relation to climate change

C. STRATEGY*

19.17 The Sustainable Development Policies Division is responsible for the implementation of subprogramme 1. The year 2015 has been marked as the year of sustainable development. It witnessed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which constitutes a robust and transformative agenda that builds on the social, economic, environmental and governance pillars of sustainable development, and converges with global development processes, namely the Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement (COP 21).

19.18 Nonetheless, challenges persist in the Arab region: a rising demand for food, water and energy, which is taking an increasingly heavy toll on the scarce natural resources and the environment, and exacerbating food insecurity; unsustainable production and consumption patterns; inefficient energy production, distribution and consumption, adding to an already high volume of waste; and climate change and its impact. ESCWA is well

* Paragraphs under the heading "Strategy" are numbered 19.17 to 19.22, where 19 indicates programme 19, concerning economic and social development in Western Asia, of the United Nations strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019; and 17 to 22 reflect the sequential numbering of the paragraphs contained in that document which sets out all United Nations programmes. This numbering is retained under the heading "Strategy" in the ESCWA programme of work and the programme of work of each of the seven subprogrammes.

positioned to assist countries in following a more sustainable development path that relies on policy coherence across the water, energy and food sectors (nexus approach), and policy dialogue across line ministries and stakeholders at national and regional levels.

19.19 Through the implementation of the subprogramme, ESCWA will assist member States in moving towards this sustainable development path by building strong and resilient institutions; supporting a more efficient and transparent management of natural resources through the adoption of a rights-based approach to resource governance; implementing the 2030 Agenda; facilitating policy dialogue for greater food, water and energy security; and developing mechanisms for coordinated responses to climate change and other natural crises.

19.20 In that context, ESCWA will:

(a) Advocate for and raise awareness of regional and global commitments, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals, the agenda adopted by the five United Nations regional commissions to accelerate the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024, and Arab strategies for the integrated management of natural resources, climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction;

(b) Serve as a forum for promoting multisectoral policy dialogue on sustainable development issues towards forging regional positions based on enhanced science-policy interface, coherence across different sectors and institution-building;

(c) Support member States in their efforts to improve the efficient use of natural resources and adopt a rights-based approach by analysing performance in these sectors, providing policy recommendations, promoting the application of appropriate green technologies, and encouraging the integrated management of natural resources;

(d) Facilitate regional cooperation and coordination as a means to enhance food, water and energy security, alleviate poverty in rural areas and achieve social justice in terms of natural resources governance;

(e) Support the development of national or regional mechanisms, networks or green help desks for the integration of the different pillars of sustainable development;

(f) Foster regional approaches on climate change adaptation and mitigation by supporting the development of mechanisms to deal with climate change impacts, conduct impact and vulnerability assessments, and examine associated socioeconomic and environmental issues in order to inform policymaking processes and support member States in their negotiations.

19.21 This will be achieved through servicing intergovernmental bodies; conducting high-quality policy oriented research and analytical work on the science-policy interface; organizing high-level and expert meetings; providing advisory services; implementing field projects; supporting dedicated knowledge platforms for professionals; and issuing technical materials to enhance capacity to address sustainable development issues and challenges.

19.22 Work under the subprogramme will strive to maximize synergies and strategic partnerships through cooperation with different United Nations agencies and regional commissions and organizations, and participation in the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanisms on water and energy, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Regional Coordination Mechanism.

D. EXTERNAL FACTORS

6. Subprogramme 1 will achieve its objective and expected accomplishments provided that: (a) member States remain committed to giving due priority to sustainable development issues and adopt appropriate

measures for enhancing food, energy and water security; (b) political stability is improved, leading to institution-building and enhanced governance and transparency; (c) line ministries in member States cooperate and work together on key strategic issues; and (d) member States are willing to establish mechanisms/platforms at interregional and interministerial levels to cooperate on sustainable development issues and incorporate the SDGs.

E. OUTPUTS

7. The ESCWA Sustainable Development Policies Division, comprising the Water Resources Section, the Energy Section and the Food and Environment Policies Section, is responsible for implementing the expected accomplishments under subprogramme 1. The present document, however, presents only the activities and outputs falling under the responsibility of the Water Resources Section for the biennium 2018-2019.

(a) *Servicing intergovernmental and expert bodies*

(i) *Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (thirtieth session)*

Parliamentary documentation:

Report of the Committee on Water Resources on its twelfth session.

(ii) *Committee on Water Resources*

- a. Servicing the meetings of the thirteenth session of the Committee on Water Resources;
- b. Parliamentary documentation:
 - i. Report on the follow-up on the water-related SDGs in the Arab region;
 - ii. Report on the joint activities undertaken on the water-energy-food nexus;
 - iii. Report on the linkages between climate change and disaster risk reduction in the Arab region.

(iii) *Ad hoc expert group meetings*

- a. Operationalizing an institutional framework for follow-up on the water-related SDG indicators in the Arab region;
- b. Knowledge sharing to support the science-policy interface for climate change action;
- c. Water-energy-food nexus.

(iv) *Assistance to intergovernmental bodies and/or United Nations representatives/rapporteurs under their established mandates*

- a. Substantive support to the Arab Ministerial Water Council (2018 and 2019);
- b. Support to the United Nations Coordination Bodies on Energy, Water and Environment (2018 and 2019);
- c. Support to the Arab Ministerial Council for Meteorology and Climate (2018 and 2019).

(b) *Other substantive activities (regular budget)*

(i) *Recurrent publication*

ESCWA Water Development Report No. 8: the water related SDGs in the Arab Region.

(ii) *Non-recurrent publication*

Moving Towards the Implementation of Water-security in the Arab Region.

(iii) *Other printed material*

- a. Promotional material for World Water Day (2018 and 2019);
- b. Electronic platform for providing tools, methodologies and guidance on water-related SDGs;
- c. Fact sheet: Stocktaking of the national determined contributions of the Arab States;
- d. Booklet: Accessing the Regional Knowledge Hub on Climate and Water for Supporting the Science-policy Interface.

(iv) *Technical material*

- a. Working paper on regionalizing the global water-related SDG indicator framework and methodology for the Arab region;
- b. Report on accessing the Paris Agreement's means of implementation in the Arab region.

(v) *Substantive servicing of inter-agency meetings*

- a. Arab Water Week (2019);
- b. Stockholm World Water Week (2018 and 2019);
- c. Global and regional forums on energy, water and food (2018 and 2019);
- d. Substantive support to Arab States in preparation for Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2018 and 2019).

(c) *Technical cooperation (extrabudgetary)*

(i) *Advisory services*

- a. Technical advisory services to be provided to member States upon their request on monitoring SD goals/indicators;
- b. Advisory support to AWARENET;
- c. Advisory support on shared water resources management.

(ii) *Field projects*

- a. Regional initiative on the water-related SDGs in the Arab region (institutional mechanism on water-SDGs and electronic platform);
- b. Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region – phase II (RICCAR II).

(iii) *Regional workshops*

- a. Regional workshop on legal frameworks for shared water resources management;
- b. Ninth Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development on Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab States (2018);
- c. Tenth Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development on Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab States (2019).

Annex**LEGISLATIVE MANDATES***General Assembly resolutions*

68/206	Oil slick on Lebanese shores
68/208	Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea
68/211	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
68/212	Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind
68/213	Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa
68/214	Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its contribution to sustainable development
68/215	Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its first universal session and the implementation of section IV.C, entitled "Environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development", of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
68/217	Sustainable mountain development
68/233	Agriculture development, food security and nutrition
69/215	International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015, and further efforts to achieve the sustainable development of water resources
69/220	Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind
69/221	Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa
69/222	Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its contribution to sustainable development
69/225	Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy
69/240	Agriculture development, food security and nutrition
69/245	Oceans and law of the sea
69/292	Development of an international legally-binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction
70/169	The human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

70/225 Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

71/222 International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-2028

Economic and Social Council resolution

2012/27 Human settlements

ESCWA resolutions

281 (XXV) Addressing climate change issues in the Arab region

305 (XXVII) Sustainable development in the region and follow-up and implementation of the decisions of the Rio+20 Conference
