



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

Committee on Water Resources  
Thirteenth session  
Beirut, 27-28 June 2019



Item 12 of the provisional agenda

**Proposed programme plan for 2020 in the area of integrated  
natural resource management for sustainable development**

**Summary**

The present document contains the proposed programme plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for 2020 under subprogramme 1 on integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development. The proposed ESCWA programme plan for 2020 was welcomed by the Executive Committee of ESCWA at its fifth meeting held in Beirut, on 18 and 19 December 2018. It will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly for adoption in the second half of 2019.

The present document features the global orientation of the work of ESCWA and the list of deliverables for 2020 under its subprogramme 1. The Committee on Water Resources is invited to take note of its content.

## **SUBPROGRAMME 1: INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Objective:** To support member States to achieve water, energy and food security and informed climate change action.

1. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will work with member States on six pillars of natural resources management for sustainable development. It will focus on improving energy performance through the promotion of energy efficient buildings and will provide support to identify and attract potential financing sources for energy transition programmes. Additionally, it will enhance the capacity of member States to develop integrated policies for increased water security, promote sustainable agriculture for increased food security and take informed action on climate change. The ESCWA secretariat will provide support to coordinate the management of natural resources at the regional level through intergovernmental mechanisms.

### *1. Energy efficiency in buildings (SDG 7)*

2. Energy consumption has more than doubled since 1990 in the Arab region, the only one in the world that has experienced no reduction in energy intensity over the past 25 years. In 2018, the ESCWA secretariat reviewed the status of the buildings sector's energy performance, which accounted for over two thirds of total annual electricity consumption in the region. It suggested the implementation of a sustained retrofit programme to improve the thermal quality of buildings and replace old low efficiency equipment and appliances so as to improve energy sustainability in the existing buildings stock.

3. The main challenges in the implementation of energy efficiency programmes in most Arab countries are low subsidized energy prices, a lack of readily available financing mechanisms, lax enforcement procedures and a shortage of skilled specialists. One effective way to meet these challenges is to devise programmes and policies for immediate, simple and proven energy efficiency actions that can be applied to very large segments of the buildings stock and at the household level.

4. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will advise member States and build their institutions' capacities to set up frameworks and programmes to disseminate proven energy efficiency measures in the buildings sector. The frameworks will be based on a comprehensive approach that incorporates technical, financial and logistical interventions. In 2019, in the first implementation phase of this activity, baseline mapping studies will be conducted in three member States.

### *2. Sustainable energy transition programmes (SDG 7)*

5. The transition to more sustainable energy systems in the Arab region requires changes in the energy mix and substantial financing sources that are beyond the present level of investments. The ESCWA secretariat supports member States in the formulation of policies that promote energy efficiency and investment in renewable energy. It reviews the status of energy efficiency and renewable energy project financing in member States and identifies successful policy reforms that contribute to the transformation of the related markets in the region. Based on the findings, it assists member States in improving the economic viability of projects, thus enhancing bankability and access to financing.

6. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will advise member States on available instruments for financing sustainable energy transitions, identify suitable ways to make greater use of international financing means available for clean energy projects, and build the capacity of member States to secure funding for sustainable energy transitions. The secretariat will facilitate partnerships and coordinated action among stakeholders, jointly with the Islamic Development Bank and the Sustainable Energy for All Middle East Hub. Additionally, the ESCWA secretariat will assist member States in tapping the potential of joint ventures and regional

cooperation for investing in the local manufacturing of equipment and technologies in support of the sustainable energy transition.

### 3. *Integrated policies for increased water security* (SDG 6)

7. The Arab region is one of the most water scarce regions in the world, with 18 out of 22 Arab countries falling below the renewable freshwater scarcity threshold and 13 falling below the absolute water scarcity threshold. The situation is aggravated by dependency on external transboundary water resources, climate change, infrastructure damage due to occupation and conflict, declining water quality, non-revenue water losses, inefficient water use and high population growth rates. To better address these challenges within the context of the 2030 Agenda, the ESCWA secretariat is supporting member States to align existing national and regional strategies with the SDGs, including the Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region to Meet the Challenges and Future Needs for Sustainable Development (2010-2030), whose revision will be considered for adoption in 2020.

8. The ESCWA secretariat will support this policy process by providing substantive and technical support to member States and intergovernmental mechanisms on ways to frame and inform water security policies and programmes in the region. This will include focus on integrated approaches to water resources management aimed at achieving water and sanitation for all under SDG 6, while ensuring sufficient access to freshwater resources for energy and food production in urban and rural areas. Climate change and the management of transboundary water resources will also be considered, so that basin and inter-basin aspects of managing shared surface and groundwater resources are factored into national planning. The ESCWA secretariat will work through inter-agency mechanisms at the global level (UN-Water) and regional level (Regional Coordination Mechanism Working Group on Water) to enhance coherence and coordination in the support provided to Arab States for the formulation of water strategies, action plans and programmes.

### 4. *Sustainable agriculture for increased food security* (SDG 2)

9. The Arab region is facing rapid land degradation and desertification. It struggles with water scarcity and losses in the quality of soils, which are affecting agricultural productivity and food security. Additional structural causes of food insecurity, such as import dependency and poverty, are exacerbated by conflicts and instability, which have become the single most important factor driving food insecurity in the region in recent years. Direct effects include the razing of farm land, the spreading of cluster bombs and mines, the killing of livestock, the destruction of machinery and the blocking of access to markets. Conflict also has had indirect effects by discouraging investment in agriculture and export sectors.

10. To address these challenges, the ESCWA secretariat supports member States to formulate and implement integrated and inclusive approaches for achieving food security. It promotes sustainable agriculture through the development of monitoring frameworks, assessments and technical assistance. In 2020, the secretariat will focus on operationalizing the regional framework for monitoring food security that will be under review by member States in 2019. Based on this integrated monitoring framework, it will report on food security in the regional context and disseminate information on the findings to different audiences. Additionally, two technical cooperation field projects aiming at improving the sustainability of the agricultural sector in the region will support farmers in improving their agricultural production through the adoption of good agricultural practices. Lessons learned from the projects will be shared and discussed through intergovernmental mechanisms and in expert meetings involving ministries responsible for agriculture and water resources.

5. *Informed climate action by member States*  
(SDG 13)

11. Enhanced capacity for climate action requires informed analysis about climate change impacts and implications for sustainable development. At the thirtieth ministerial ESCWA session, held in Beirut in June 2018, member States welcomed the establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies. The Centre facilitates access to data and information, delivers advisory services and training on measures and means to advance climate action, and provides a regional platform for regional exchange and consensus building.

12. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will organize regional workshops for climate change negotiators to discuss existing and emerging issues, and build the capacity of energy, water, agriculture and environment stakeholders to formulate climate change adaptation and mitigation plans and projects. These efforts will inform the preparation of nationally determined contributions and adaptation plans under the Paris Agreement, as well as reporting under SDG 13. The ESCWA secretariat will support intergovernmental and expert groups to foster regional exchange and consensus building on regional challenges that affect the ability to formulate and deliver on climate change commitments at the national and global levels. Access to regional datasets, geographic information system tools and technical materials for integrated climate action will be facilitated through a regional knowledge hub.

6. *Regional coordination for sustainable environmental and natural resource management*  
(SDG 17)

13. Ministries of environment have been among the leading champions of the 2030 Agenda and have repeatedly requested the support of ESCWA in convening regional consultations and seminars to discuss national and regional monitoring and reporting on SDG progress. National research centres have pursued country-level initiatives for technology transfer and application.

14. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will provide technical and advisory support to intergovernmental mechanisms, with the aim of forging regional consensus on integrated and inclusive approaches to sustainable development. Such approaches will incorporate the management of water, energy and land resources in development planning so as to support the achievement of water, energy and food security in member States. The secretariat will prepare technical materials and deliver training on policies and programmes aimed at improving sustainable production and consumption in the Arab region. Focus will be placed on green technologies.

15. The ESCWA secretariat will convene expert consultations and build consensus among member States on regional challenges and priorities for advancing access to and understanding of green and appropriate technologies. During 2020, the SDG review year, it will advocate for leveraging technology to advance implementation. To do so, it will develop technical materials and provide advisory services, paying specific attention to climate-sensitive green technologies that can enhance water, energy and food security.

## **PROPOSED LIST OF DELIVERABLES FOR THE YEAR 2020**

### A. FACILITATION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESS AND EXPERT BODIES

#### *Substantive services for meetings (number of three-hour meetings)*

1. Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels (4).
2. Substantive servicing of the thirty-sixth meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity and its Committees of Experts on Electricity in Arab Countries and on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (8).
3. Substantive servicing of the thirteenth session of the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) and the nineteenth meeting of its Technical, Scientific and Advisory Committee (8).
4. Substantive servicing of the third session of the Arab Council of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology and Climate, the thirty-sixth session of its Permanent Committee for Meteorology and the fifth meeting of the Sub-Committee on Weather and Climate Risk Information Management (12).
5. Substantive servicing of the thirty-second session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) and of the twenty-second session of its Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) (8).
6. Meetings of ad hoc expert groups on water, energy, food security, climate change, and other various issues related to management of natural resources for sustainable development (18).

### B. GENERATION AND TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

#### *Field and technical cooperation projects (number of projects)*

7. Regional Initiative for Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in the Arab Region (1).
8. Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET) (1).
9. Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies (1).
10. ESCWA Technology Centre (1).

#### *Seminars, workshops and training events (number of days)*

11. Seminars and workshops for capacity development on water, energy, food security, climate change, and other issues related to the management of natural resources for sustainable development (4).

#### *Publications (number of publications)*

12. Publication on food security (1).
13. Publication on climate resilience (1).

#### *Technical material (number of materials)*

14. Guidelines, technical materials and reports on water resources (1).
15. Policy briefs and reports on energy (1).
16. Technical materials and reports on food security (1).

17. Technical materials on issues related to the management of natural resources for sustainable development (1).

C. SUBSTANTIVE DELIVERABLES

*Consultation, advice and advocacy (non-quantified)*

18. Substantive servicing of the eleventh International Forum on Energy for Development; substantive contribution to the Vienna Energy Forum.

*Databases and substantive digital materials (non-quantified)*

19. Regional Knowledge Hub on Climate Change.

D. COMMUNICATION DELIVERABLES

*Outreach programmes, special events and information materials (non-quantified)*

20. Fact sheet on the existing joint ventures for local manufacturing of energy efficient and cleaner energy equipment in the Arab region: successes and challenges; booklet on the water-related Sustainable Development Goals; food security fact sheet; and booklet on the management of natural resources for climate change action.

-----