

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

Committee on Water Resources
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**Regional cooperation for climate change adaptation
in the Arab region****Summary**

ESCWA is working actively on climate change assessment, adaptation and capacity development. Those efforts come in response to recommendations by the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources and resolutions issued by ministerial councils under the auspices of the League of Arab States.

ESCWA is finalizing a regional climate change integrated assessment report within the framework of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR). The present report sets out the components and methodology used to produce the integrated assessment, along with some information on climate change and extreme weather indices. The report then retraces implementation of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) Project on Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Tools, the goal of which was to produce a training manual with five modules for climate change Arab negotiators. The report goes on to detail workshops and other capacity-building efforts by ESCWA related to climate change in the region, including preparations for United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) conferences, support for Arab countries in defining their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and a range of climate change and water-related events in which ESCWA participated.

The report concludes with a list of forthcoming activities and recommendations to be addressed to ESCWA and its member States.

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Introduction

1. ESCWA has carried out a number of activities on climate change impact assessment, adaptation and capacity development on climate change negotiation over the past two years in line with recommendations made by the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources and resolutions adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), the Arab Council of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology and Climate, and the Council of Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE). ESCWA also contributes to regional strategies and action plans endorsed by those councils under the auspices of the League of Arab States. They include: 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; the Arab Framework Action Plan on Climate Change (AFAPCC) 2010-2020; and the Arab Strategy for Disaster Reduction 2020.
2. ESCWA is fostering cooperation on climate change adaptation in the region through assessments, capacity development and technical cooperation.
3. Those efforts are channelled through three work clusters: the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR); the United Nations Development Account project on Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Tools; and a series of capacity-building workshops for Arab climate change negotiators, which have drawn on regional efforts to promote dialogue on and understanding of issues relating to the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including negotiations and commitments related to adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology, capacity-building and transparency.
4. The present report reviews progress with RICCAR, the Development Account project, and efforts to support Arab climate change negotiations. It also outlines planned future activities and presents a number of recommendations.

I. CLIMATE CHANGE ASSESSMENT

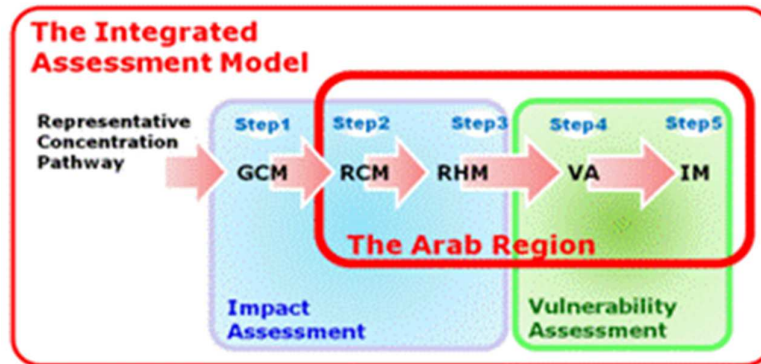
5. RICCAR continues to assess the impact of climate change on freshwater resources in the Arab region, and the broader socioeconomic and environmental repercussions for the region.
6. The implementation of RICCAR has involved Arab Governments, the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies, ESCWA, other United Nations entities and international institutions, including: the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ); United Nations Environmental Programme/Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) office in Cairo; United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH); United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR); Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI); and World Meteorological Organization (WMO). ESCWA coordinates the regional initiative and funding is provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development through the Adaptation to Climate Change in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Region (ACCWaM) project, which is led by GIZ.

A. RICCAR INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

7. Preparation of the RICCAR integrated assessment followed a step-by-step approach. The impact assessment component is based on the generation of dynamically downscaled regional climate models (RCMs) covering the Arab/MENA domain, nested in a series of general circulation models (GCMs). The output they generate is used to run regional hydrological models (RHMs) and basin-level hydrological models and, in turn, the results of those models are fed into the regional vulnerability assessment based on an integrated mapping

approach (figure 1). This approach can be used to inform climate change adaptation policies, measures, monitoring and disaster risk reduction.

Figure 1. RICCAR integrated assessment methodology



8. RICCAR climate change projections are based on two representative concentration pathways (RCPs) developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to inform global and regional climate modelling in its Fifth Assessment Report (AR5). The climate change projections generated in RICCAR were based on two scenarios: RCP 4.5 (moderate case scenario) and RCP 8.5 (worst case/business as usual scenario). The climate modelling outputs were generated on a 50km x 50km scale. The results presented in RICCAR are based on regional climate modelling outputs generated by SMHI.

9. Temperature and precipitation extreme climate projection indices were based on the WMO standard and adjusted indices developed by the Expert Team on Climate Change Detection and Indices (ETCCDI).

B. PROJECTED CLIMATE CHANGE AND EXTREME CLIMATE INDICES

10. Regional climate modelling projections under RICCAR, comparing the 2081-2100 forecast period with the 1986-2005 reference period, reflect the impact of climate change on the water-scarce Arab region, with higher temperatures and decreased precipitation across large areas. The comparison shows a mean annual temperature increase of between 1°C and 3°C for RCP 4.5 and between 2°C and 5°C for RCP 8.5.

11. According to the projections, the eastern Mediterranean coast and North Africa will experience an average temperature increase of 2.5°C, with a maximum of 3.4°C in the Atlas region in Morocco, Upper Egypt and the southern Sinai Peninsula. Temperatures in sub-Saharan countries are expected to rise by between 3.5°C and 4°C, and in the Arab peninsula by as much as 2.5°C. The greatest increase in the region, 4.2°C, will occur in the area extending from the northern Hejaz, in the Arab peninsula, to southern Jordan.

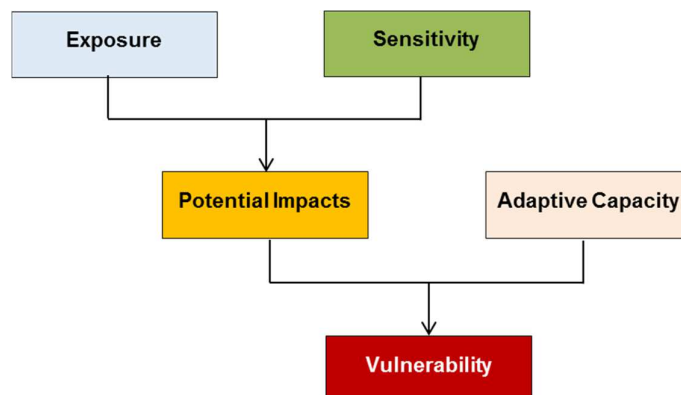
12. Average precipitation is projected to decrease throughout the 21st century. Both scenarios indicate a reduction in average monthly precipitation of 8-10 mm in coastal areas, mainly around the Atlas Mountains in the west and upper Euphrates and Tigris river basin in the east. Those changes correlate with changes in run-off and water availability. The degree and intensity of change will vary in line with geography and the rate of climate change, as the growing frequency of extreme events underlines.

13. The increased frequency of extreme events is often linked with acceleration in the rate of climate change and was evident in RICCAR outputs for extreme climate indices. For instance, the change in the summer days with TMAX > 40°C indicates a strong projected warming under both scenarios in the Sahara and central Arab peninsula, and a less dramatic increase in coastal areas. Under Change in the Maximum Length of Dry Spell, more dry days (and hence a longer dry, summer season) are projected for the Mediterranean, and northern and western parts of the Arab peninsula. More detailed results are available in *Climate Projections and Extreme Climate Indices for the Arab Region* (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2015/Booklet.2).

C. VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT APPROACH AND OUTCOMES






14. The methodology used by IPCC in its Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), issued in 2007, was employed in the vulnerability assessment component of RICCAR.¹ Vulnerability is understood to be the function of a system's exposure and sensitivity to climate change, and capacity to adapt and cope with its effects (figure 2).

Figure 2. Vulnerability assessments methodological framework



15. RICCAR vulnerability assessments consider five water-dependent sectors in the Arab region, thereby providing a broad understanding of the potential impact of climate change (figure 3).

Figure 3. Selected sectors and impacts

Sectors	Impacts	(Sub) Vulnerability
 Water	Change in water availability	V0
 Biodiversity & Ecosystems	Change in area covered by forests	V1
	Change in area of wetlands/marshes	V2
 Agriculture	Change of water available for crops	V3
	Change of rangeland for livestock	V4
 Infrastructure & Human Settlements	Change in inland flooding area	V5
	Change in coastal flooding area	V6
 People	Change in water available for drinking	V7
	Change in health due to heat stress	V8
	Change of employment rate in the agricultural sector	V9

16. In order to identify indicators to operationalize the assessment, impact chains were developed by starting from the selected climate change impact and identifying for each vulnerability component (exposure,

¹ Parry, M. L. and others (eds), Climate change 2007: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Working Group II contribution to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

sensitivity and adaptive capacity) the key contributing factors.² For instance, a chain for the impact of climate change on water availability and selected indicators can be developed by taking into account the key factors on the exposure side, such as run-off and change in evapotranspiration, and several extreme event indicators. The sensitivity of the Arab countries is determined by, for example, their hydrogeology and water consumption per capita. Adaptive capacity is represented by socioeconomic factors organized into various dimensions (and associated indicators), such as economic resources, equity, technology, knowledge and awareness, infrastructure and institutions. The vulnerability index is calculated for each sector by defining the indicators and their weights, based on the impact chains and expert judgment. At the sector level, vulnerability is aggregated by each component (exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity). By aggregating the vulnerability of each sector, an overall vulnerability map can be derived to enable identification of hotspot areas.³

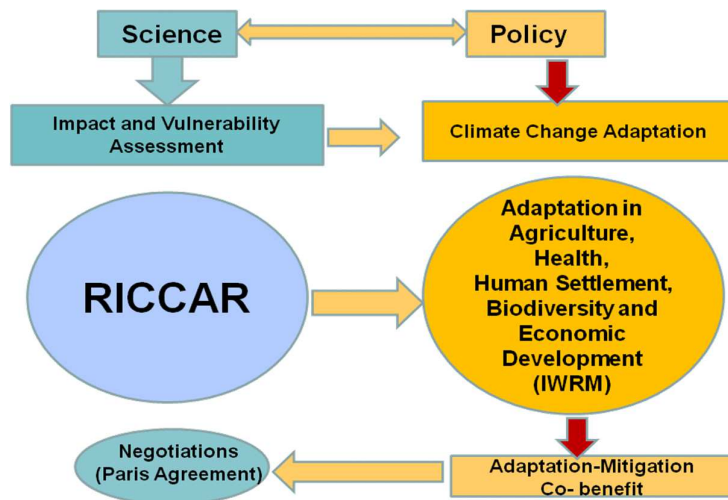
17. The above process involved consultation with regional experts and stakeholders. E-questionnaires prepared by ESCWA, covering the five sectors and ten selected sub-sectors, generated more than 360 responses in 2015, which were tabulated to inform the vulnerability assessment. Consultations included the expert group review of the climate change integrated vulnerability assessment (Beirut, 27-28 April 2016), which was conducted with the support of GIZ through the ACCWaM project, and the expert peer review meeting of the RICCAR integrated assessment findings (Beirut, 5-9 December 2016), which was supported by Sida and GIZ/ACCWaM. The peer review discussed the findings and maps generated from the regional climate modelling, hydrological modelling and vulnerability assessment components of the RICCAR integrated assessment.

II. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

A. CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

18. The scientific results of the integrated climate change impact and vulnerability assessment in RICCAR can be used to inform policy on adaptation strategies in sectors such as agriculture, environment, health, human settlement and economic development (figure 4), in line with provisions of the Paris Agreement calling for adaptation planning that takes into account vulnerable people, places and ecosystems. They can also assist climate change negotiators from the region in formulating positions with regard to adaptation and mitigation measures (adaptation-mitigation co-benefit).

Figure 4. Linking climate science to policy, adaptive strategy and negotiation processes



² Germany, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, *The Vulnerability Sourcebook* (Bonn: GIZ, 2014). This provides a comprehensive description of how impact chains are developed and indicators derived from them in modules 2 and 3.

³ ESCWA and others, *Training Manual on the Integrated Vulnerability Assessment Methodology* (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2015/Manual.1).

19. To that end, ESCWA, together with UNEP/ROWA, ACSAD and GIZ, the World Health Organization regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (WHO/CEHA) and the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), launched the Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying IWRM Tools project in 2013. The purpose of the project was to produce a training manual with five modules covering key sectors: agriculture, environment, health, human settlements and economic development.

20. After a process involving the creation and review of draft training modules, training workshops on each module were held for experts from the relevant ministries of the 22 Arab States and from the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET). Those experts presented success stories and case studies from Arab States, some of which were incorporated in to the final modules.

B. OVERVIEW OF ADAPTATION SECTOR MODULES

21. The training manual is designed to develop the capacity of public and private sector professionals, including academics and representatives from NGOs, in the area of climate change adaptation in the selected sectors and focusing on links with the water sector, by applying IWRM.

22. Each training module addresses:

- (a) The impact of climate change on each sector and links between water and sector issues;
- (b) Key RICCAR indicators and outputs and their role in identifying adaptation measures, and tools for assessing sector vulnerability;
- (c) Stocktaking of adaptation measures targeting the concerned sector through IWRM principles, and the means to evaluate, prioritize and screen the adaptation measures;
- (d) Institutions, governance, legislation, stakeholders, barriers and other issues pertaining to the implementation of those measures;
- (e) Required action and follow-up on adaptation programmes at the national and regional/global policy levels.

23. In addition, they each contain a list of references used to produce the module, suggested reading and exercises on the concepts underlying IWRM.

24. The main sector specific issues addressed in each module were:

(a) *Agriculture*: The module highlights how climate change adaptation links with IWRM, distinguishing different measures related to the supply of and demand for water, and the application of modelling and remote sensing techniques in farming sub-sectors. It also addresses means of targeting activities, such as water storage and quality, water harvesting, rain-fed farming, irrigated farming, forestry and agro-forestry, livestock management, pasture management, fisheries and aquaculture;

(b) *Environment*: The role of ecosystem-based management and IWRM in identifying, evaluating and prioritizing adaptation measures and indicators are the core of the module. Areas of interest include: the state and functions of the ecosystem, supply of services, strategic adaptive management cycle and valuing ecosystem services;

(c) *Health*: The module addresses links between climate change, the water sector and flood-related diseases, heat-wave related mortality and morbidity, water-related illnesses, food-borne diseases and malnutrition, micro-biological drinking water quality and other health matters. It discusses current adaptation tools related to water and public health, which mainly consist of environmental quality monitoring control

programmes, the assessment of vulnerability and developing adaptation strategies using WHO guidance on how to include health in national adaptation plans;

(d) *Human settlements*: The module addresses problems facing human settlements in the Arab region, which include water scarcity, population growth, urbanization, displacement and infrastructure issues (intermittent supply, urban supply efficiency, and storm and wastewater management). It contains urban impact assessment tools for testing the performance of drainage networks in various climate scenarios. Adaptation measures discussed include harvesting of flash floods, water demand management, reuse of grey water, treatment technologies for grey-water recycling, utilisation of the water footprint assessment tool and efficient water tariff systems;

(e) *Economic development*: The module addresses the impact of climate change on the macroeconomic level and multisectoral development at the level of specific sectors and how to implement economic integrated assessment models (IAMs) that take climate projections into account. It also discusses the application of climate proofing methodology and identification of relevant sources of climate financing and investment tools.

25. Mainstreaming gender considerations into climate change adaptation policies, programmes and projects is essential and is addressed in each of the modules.

26. The modules contain exercises on IWRM and climate change adaptation that can be adapted to the national context. The training materials were designed as PowerPoint presentations, included in CD-ROM format with the training manual.

III. SUPPORTING ARAB STATES IN CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS

A. REGIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR NEGOTIATORS

27. Aware of common challenges across the region, and the specific needs of developing countries, Arab Governments took an active part in preparations for the twenty-first Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2015, and contributed to the drafting of the Paris Agreement adopted at the Conference. The commitment made in Paris was confirmed during COP22, which took place in Marrakesh, Morocco, in November 2016.

28. Since 2013, ESCWA, in conjunction with the League of Arab States and other partners, has held seven workshops for climate change negotiators, in response to requests from CAMRE, AMWC and the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology. Issues covered have included adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology and capacity development, and have benefitted from RICCAR climate projections.

29. The fourth to seventh in that series of regional training workshops have taken place since the eleventh session of the Committee on Water Resources: in Doha (19-21 May 2015) and Cairo (17-19 November 2015) to prepare for UNFCCC-COP21; in Cairo (3-6 April 2016) to examine the legal implications of the Paris Agreement, enhance understanding of the UNFCCC financial mechanism, and discuss how to access finance through the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and provide technology assistance through the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), with a view to helping States to meet the targets set out in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); and in Rabat (25-29 September 2016) to prepare for COP22 and discuss how to implement the Paris Agreement.

30. Under a road map hammered out at the seventh workshop, it was agreed that countries which are most advanced in GCF activities will share their experience and lessons with other countries in the region. It was recommended that the Fund secretariat should continue to prepare country programme briefs with Arab countries in order to facilitate engagement with the Fund, build a pipeline of projects and ensure the translation of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INCDs) into real investments. It was also agreed that

ESCWA and the Fund secretariat would discuss a future partnership to facilitate the generation of climate-smart investments in the region.

31. ESCWA conducted a mapping study of NDCs submitted by Arab countries and, on that basis, discussed with Arab negotiators areas of common regional interest and priorities, and similar projects and activities on which countries could cooperate with each other and with specialized regional organizations and agencies. The mapping exercise provided a matrix that included information on: adaptation activities; types of mitigation contribution; sectors covered; gases coverage; the conditionality of emissions reduction; planned use of international market mechanisms in reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); estimated cost of implementing adaptation/mitigation measures; loss and damage costs and impacts linked to climate change effects; economic diversification; and the impact of response measures.

32. The Commission provided support to the Arab Group meetings held within the workshops programme under the auspices of the League of Arab States, which led to the drafting of a paper for negotiators outlining the common Arab position on climate change. ESCWA also received proposals from the negotiators on key issues requiring closer study, such as the IPCC special report on the impact of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

B. UNFCCC CONFERENCES OF THE PARTIES

33. ESCWA presented the RICCAR projections at COP21 and COP22 in order to inform the international community about how climate change affects the Arab region. ESCWA, the League and the Arab Group organized a side event at COP21 to showcase regional, and national initiatives and case studies on climate change impact, vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategies. They were joined by the Cairo office of UNESCO at COP22 in running a full-day session for negotiators from Arab countries and regional organizations on adaptation and mitigation initiatives in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

34. The Commission also supported thematic side events organized by UN-Water at COP21 on “the pivotal role of water in climate change adaptation and mitigation” and at COP22 on “hydro-climate services for all”. The latter event, held in conjunction with UNESCO, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and WMO, aimed to bridge gaps between the producers and users of hydro-climate services, and between science and policy.

35. The Commission also joined the other four United Nations regional commissions in organizing two side-events at COP22. The first, on “SDG Goal 17: building capacity for the 2030 Agenda through climate action solutions for regional implementation”, explored linkages and potential synergies between INDCs and the SDGs. The second, on “the economics of climate change: regional perspectives programme”, addressed the economic impact of climate change by region and the investments needed at the regional and national levels for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

36. The Commission also contributed to another COP22 side event, entitled “Palestinian main achievements between accession on 17 March 2016 and COP22, and future ambitions”, focusing on the NDCs of the State of Palestine and its plans for combating climate change in the face of local challenges and obstacles caused by the Israeli occupation.

C. OTHER ACTIVITIES

37. ESCWA has systematically reviewed RICCAR and climate change activities at intergovernmental meetings, including the following:

(a) Sessions of the AMWC Technical Scientific Advisory Committee, held in May 2015, January 2016 and October 2016;

(b) The 31st meeting of the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 20-26 April 2015), during which the draft terms of reference for the Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF) were approved;

(c) Meeting of the First Arab Forum for Meteorology and Climate (Abu Dhabi, 8-9 May 2016), the 32nd meeting of the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology (Abu Dhabi, 10-11 May 2016), and the first meeting of the Arab Council of Ministers responsible for Meteorology and Climate, (Abu Dhabi, 12-13 May 2016);

(d) First meeting of the Subcommittee on Weather and Climate Risk Information Management (Amman, 28-29 February 2016).

38. ESCWA has raised awareness of RICCAR and activities related to climate change through a series of consultative meetings and conferences, held jointly with its partners, including the following:

(a) During the 2015 World Water Week, held in Stockholm, ESCWA organized a seminar on “climate change impacts on water for development in the Arab region” with RICCAR partner institutions on 25 August 2015. The aim of the seminar was to show how the science-policy interface has been institutionalized in the framework of RICCAR to support climate change assessment and adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development planning;

(b) ESCWA contributed to the first annual WeatherTech conference (Dubai, 16-17 September 2015), organized by the National Centre of Meteorology and Seismology in the United Arab Emirates. The Commission delivered a presentation on interpreting climate change and extreme events projections for early warning in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, based on RICCAR outputs. At the second WeatherTech event (Abu Dhabi, 1-2 November 2016), the Commission delivered a presentation on linking strategy, policy and climate change modelling to create an adaptive strategy for mitigation of current and future climate risks;

(c) ESCWA contributed to a workshop on the role of climate information and services in support of decision-making in the context of climate change and regional consultations on climate services (Casablanca, Morocco, 4-6 October 2016). Organized by the Moroccan Meteorological Office and WMO, it focused on the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) and sectoral needs for meteorological data and information. The Commission delivered a presentation on projected climate and extreme weather indices and meteorological services in the Arab region.

IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

39. At a meeting of the Arab Permanent Committee on Meteorology (Cairo, 24-26 April 2017), ESCWA will report on progress with RICCAR-related climate services and modelling, the Arab Climate Outlook Forum and the RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub.

40. It will also deliver a progress report on RICCAR at the fifteenth session of the AMWC Technical Scientific Advisory Committee and, thereafter, at the Council’s ninth ministerial session, both of which are due to be held in Morocco in May 2017.

41. The next RICCAR Climate Change Assessment Report will be launched in May 2017 at a high-level conference focused on climate change assessment and adaptation. The report will include results of the integrated assessment, the vulnerability assessment and analysis on shared surface water basins and disaster loss inventories, and a series of case studies and best practices from the region. The climate change adaptation training manual is also expected to be launched at the conference.

42. The seventh issue of the ESCWA Water Development Report, which focuses on climate change and disaster risk reduction, will be released by December 2017. The report looks at links between climate change

and communities at risk, and policies to address natural disasters, particularly water-related disasters such as droughts, floods and landslides, which are being exacerbated by climate change. Drawing on RICCAR outputs and including information on the risk and frequency of disasters and resulting losses in selected Arab countries, collected in cooperation with UNISDR, it reviews related regional strategies and action plans. An expert group meeting will be organized by ESCWA on the same subject in 2017.

43. The RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub will be established in 2017 in coordination with ACSAD and FAO. Under recommendations endorsed by AMWC in 2015, it will be hosted on the FAO Fenix IT Platform. ESCWA and ACSAD will manage its technical secretariat, and the AMWC Technical Scientific and Advisory Committee will oversee its operations.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

44. The following recommendations are submitted for consideration. It is suggested that the Committee should request ESCWA:

(a) To ensure the issue of the climate change assessment report in 2017 in coordination with RICCAR partner organizations;

(b) To solicit additional financial resources to support operations of the Regional Knowledge Hub, including the provision of knowledge resources tailored to the needs of the region, with a view to informing policy and research on climate change assessment and adaptation. That should also entail support for Arab institutions and researchers to prepare peer reviewed journal articles designed to raise global awareness of the climate change challenges facing Arab States;

(c) To organize regional workshops to support the capacity-building of Arab policymakers and negotiators on climate change.

45. It is suggested that the Committee should encourage member States:

To draw upon RICCAR and UNDA project findings and recommendations to inform regional and national policies, strategies, reports and research, including UNFCCC national communications, NDCs, sector vulnerability assessments and national inputs to the IPCC Special Report.
