



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



MENA Climate Week 2022

High-Level Segment Session 3:

High-level panel discussion on Accelerating
Implementation in this Critical Decade

*Innovation, policies, technology, and capacity building
for climate action*

28 March 2022, 12:30-1:25 PM, Main Plenary, Atlantis A & B

Special Keynote Address of Dr. Rola Dashti

United Nations Under Secretary-General and Executive
Secretary,
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Good morning everyone.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by acknowledging the commitments and steps taken by countries of the Arab region to accelerate climate action and achieve our sustainable development goals by 2030. However, the challenges we are facing, as Sami and the others have stated, requires more bold actions and stronger political commitments.

To accelerate our response to these compounding challenges, I have four messages to share with you.

First, there is an urgent need to ensure that science drives our climate policies.

Climate policies must be informed to be actionable. Accelerating implementation means increasing access to data and analysis through digital platforms and online tools. For instance, our collaborative RICCAR initiative provides open access to regional climate projections and geospatial datasets that have informed impact and vulnerability assessments at the regional, country and basin levels. The ESCWA Social Expenditure Monitor offers online tools for budgetary and fiscal policy reform, which is needed to track and allocate resources for climate action.

Disruptive technologies such as AI and remote sensing create a common knowledge base and help to foster dialogue between countries, as we are doing in collaboration with the World Bank in the Mashreq region and with Arab States on groundwater to support water security under a changing climate.

Open access to information not only serves policy-makers, but also empowers civil society and youth engagement in climate

action and become partners in the pursuit of new development pathways.

Second, Innovation adoption is essential.

Innovation, as we heard, can drive food system transformation, the transition to a green economy and net zero carbon emission.

Countries in the region must develop green economy strategies and adopt policies that support sustainable and responsible practices, such as lower barriers to trade and intellectual property, carbon capture, and household energy efficiency.

SMEs and economic diversification can be an important vehicle to drive innovation programs and reduce the price of technologies to make them more commercially viable and easily deployable.

In addition, transforming the extractives industries into an engine for sustainable development and adopting circular carbon economy framework can also accelerate a just and sustainable transition for all.

Third, Innovative finance is also needed.

Arab States are struggling under the weight of debt. COVID-19 has pushed gross public debt in the Arab region to a historic high of \$1.4 trillion, putting some of the region's middle-income countries at high risk of debt vulnerability. In tandem, the region receives just 6% of adaptation finance globally despite being the most water scarce region in the world. Arab LDCs are also being left behind, receiving just 5% of climate finance flows coming to the region.

ESCWA has launched the Climate/SDGs Debt Swap-Donor Nexus Initiative to help create fiscal space for climate action in countries that face liquidity constraints and suffer high debt burdens. Such swaps provide opportunities for transformative change in countries by redirecting resources towards a green recovery and providing creditors with an opportunity to make true on their climate finance commitments to developing countries.

ESCWA is also pleased to partner with the League of Arab States and the UNFCCC to develop a needs-based climate finance strategy that can help funnel financial resources to the region through improved targeting, training and technical assistance.

Fourth and finally, climate change cannot be left to one ministry alone. An all-of-government and an all-of-society approach is needed.

Policy coordination and project coherence are vital. Public policies and programming must also be complemented by private sector action and civil society engagements.

Dear friends,

The upcoming COP 27 and 28 provide a unique opportunity for Arab States to demonstrate their collective commitment to advance climate actions under the leadership of our esteemed Egyptian and Emirati hosts.

ESCWA stands in support of our member States and the People of the Arab Region to accelerate implementation of climate actions during this critical decade and beyond.

Thank you.