

Consultative Meeting on the Environmental Dimension of the Sustainable Development Agenda: Science-based and Inclusive Environmental Solutions for Advancing SDGs Implementation

In-person and online

Cairo, 25-26 February 2025

The discussions focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: Goal 3 (Health), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 8 (Economic Growth), Goal 14 (Life Below Water), and Goal 17 (Partnerships). The meeting aimed to foster dialogue on comprehensive, science-based, and environmentally sustainable solutions to support the achievement of these goals.

The meeting resulted in an outcome document outlining key messages that reflect regional perspectives on various pathways to accelerate SDG implementation from an environmental standpoint, with a particular focus on the goals under review this year. This document will be presented to CAMRE, and its key messages will be conveyed to the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and the High-Level Political Forum, highlighting regional priorities.

A total of 71 participants, both in person and online, from 17 Arab countries attended the meeting. The attendees included representatives from governments, academic institutions, regional and international organizations, civil society, and the private sector.

Key Messages

The key messages below highlight the main priorities for integrating the environmental dimension into SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14, and 17. A detailed overview of the meeting outcomes is provided in the annex.

On SDG 3:

- Encourage countries to accelerate digital transformation, modern technologies, and scientific research in healthcare and environmental sectors.
- Urge post-conflict countries and donor states to leverage reconstruction efforts to integrate environmental considerations into health policies.
- Strengthen regional and international cooperation on e-waste management by engaging governments, the private sector, and NGOs, while advocating for supportive legislation, such as extended producer responsibility laws.

On SDG 5:

- Enforce laws that protect women's rights in employment and property ownership, particularly in managing natural resources such as agriculture.
- Support women entrepreneurs in environmental projects through dedicated business accelerators that foster green innovation and sustainable projects.

On SDG 8:

- Encourage Arab countries to integrate circular economy practices and nature-based solutions into national legislation, policies, and sustainable development plans.
- Strengthen connections between innovators, particularly young entrepreneurs in the circular economy, and investors to enhance financing opportunities and support pioneering projects.
- innovative solutions to address the challenges of transitioning to green jobs, including narrowing the gender gap in the workforce and mitigating the loss of traditional jobs.
- Establish free zones for green startups to boost regional supply chains, offering incentives such as tax and customs exemptions.

On SDG 14:

- Encourage Arab countries to fulfil their commitments under international agreements for the protection of marine environments, adopt blue economy mechanisms, and strengthen the role of regional organizations working in marine environmental fields.
- Promote access to marine data and research findings through collaboration between research centres, government agencies, and the private sector, while leveraging artificial intelligence and advanced analytics to improve data collection and processing.
- Strengthen regional cooperation to document and share successful initiatives for marine environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

On SDG 17:

- Ensure coherence and consistency between development policies and ecosystem policies.
- Strengthen national capacities by utilizing advanced technologies and artificial intelligence to collect and analyse data in support of environmental sustainability.
- Encourage the adoption of innovative sustainability-based financing methods, such as carbon credits and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards, to support environmental and sustainable solutions, contributing to the acceleration of SDG achievement, natural resource preservation, and climate change mitigation.
- Develop a regional carbon trading market with fair pricing and low verification and certification costs, with a focus on blue carbon initiatives in sustainable marine economies.
- Incorporate environmental and human security into national priorities, especially in light of geopolitical shifts and changing funding priorities, while ensuring stable resource allocation to reduce reliance on uncertain external funding.

Annex

Summary of Meeting Outcomes

The outcomes of the meeting's discussions are summarized as follows:

On SDG 3:

- Encourage countries to accelerate digital transformation, modern technologies, and scientific research in healthcare and environmental sectors.
- Urge post-conflict countries and donor states to leverage reconstruction efforts to integrate environmental considerations into health policies.
- Strengthen regional and international cooperation on e-waste management by engaging governments, the private sector, and NGOs, while advocating for supportive legislation, such as extended producer responsibility laws.
- **On Data**
 - Encourage technical and scientific entities to bridge the gap in available verified data by adopting methods for data provision (such as estimates, calculations, and measurements) to facilitate decision-making.
 - Enhance access to information by implementing laws that promote the use of platforms and systems for sharing, analyzing, and documenting information.
 - Enhance regional cooperation to address air pollution through cross-border strategies and the monitoring of emissions.
- **On Resilience and Policies**
 - Strengthen systems and mechanisms for early detection and effective response to epidemics and disasters.

On SDG 5:

- Enforce laws that protect women's rights in employment and property ownership, particularly in managing natural resources such as agriculture.
- Support women entrepreneurs in environmental projects through dedicated business accelerators that foster green innovation and sustainable projects.
- Design integrated approaches and strategies to achieve gender equality and equity, relying on verified data, particularly in agriculture, rangeland management, and the blue economy.
- Empower women in environmental management by involving them in decision-making processes and providing training programs, especially in non-traditional sectors with high economic returns.

On SDG 8:

- Encourage Arab countries to integrate circular economy practices and nature-based solutions into national legislation, policies, and sustainable development plans.
- Strengthen connections between innovators, particularly young entrepreneurs in the circular economy, and investors to enhance financing opportunities and support pioneering projects.
- innovative solutions to address the challenges of transitioning to green jobs, including narrowing the gender gap in the workforce and mitigating the loss of traditional jobs.
- Establish free zones for green startups to boost regional supply chains, offering incentives such as tax and customs exemptions.
- Strengthen the role of field schools in training farmers on sustainable agricultural practices through hands-on education, contributing to the adoption of new methods that enhance productivity while preserving the environment.

- Establish a regional system for identifying and coordinating resources, including support services, research funding, available workspaces, and connecting researchers and entrepreneurs to foster collaboration.
- Enhance regional integration in identifying opportunities for shared markets, particularly between the MENA region and Sub-Saharan Africa, to support the expansion of green businesses.
- Integrate agriculture into biodiversity conservation efforts through models such as agroforestry and the use of drought-resistant plants as natural barriers to reduce forest fires.
- Design inclusive sustainable engineering solutions that consider the needs of marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, the elderly, and women, from the design phase onward.

On SDG 14:

- Encourage Arab countries to fulfil their commitments under international agreements for the protection of marine environments, adopt blue economy mechanisms, and strengthen the role of regional organizations working in marine environmental fields.
- Promote access to marine data and research findings through collaboration between research centres, government agencies, and the private sector, while leveraging artificial intelligence and advanced analytics to improve data collection and processing.
- Strengthen regional cooperation to document and share successful initiatives for marine environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.
- Adopt international and scientific standards for the design, management, and protection of marine and coastal areas.
- Ensure the involvement of fishermen, sailors, and coastal communities in marine conservation efforts based on nature-based solutions, while providing the necessary incentives for their participation.

On SDG 17:

- Ensure coherence and consistency between development policies and ecosystem policies.
- Strengthen national capacities by utilizing advanced technologies and artificial intelligence to collect and analyse data in support of environmental sustainability.
- Encourage the adoption of innovative sustainability-based financing methods, such as carbon credits and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards, to support environmental and sustainable solutions, contributing to the acceleration of SDG achievement, natural resource preservation, and climate change mitigation.
- Develop a regional carbon trading market with fair pricing and low verification and certification costs, with a focus on blue carbon initiatives in sustainable marine economies.
- Incorporate environmental and human security into national priorities, especially in light of geopolitical shifts and changing funding priorities, while ensuring stable resource allocation to reduce reliance on uncertain external funding.
- Align the Green Middle East Initiative with the principles and concepts of forest and degraded land restoration in national and regional programs to achieve the initiative's goals.
- Encourage Arab countries to support and advocate for sustainable financing issues during the ongoing economic and development summit.
- Promote self-financing for sustainability by creating innovative financing mechanisms tailored to national needs.
- Strengthen and develop partnerships among stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of information, best practices, and securing resources to address environmental challenges and achieve development goals.
- Increase the representation of less-represented countries in development discussions, such as Somalia and Mauritania, to enhance their integration with neighbouring African economies.