



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2025/WG.1/INF.1
30 December 2024
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Consultative Meeting on the Environmental Dimension of the Sustainable Development Agenda:
Science-based and Inclusive Environmental Solutions for Advancing SDGs Implementation
Cairo, 25-26 February 2025

Information note

I. Background

In the context of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the League of Arab States, and in participation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), are organizing a regional consultative meeting on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. The event, mandated by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) through resolution 661 adopted at its 35th session on 17 October 2024, will take place from 25 to 26 February in Cairo, Egypt.

The consultation is organized in preparation for the 2025 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD), which will be held from 14 to 16 April 2025 in Beirut, Lebanon sharing the same theme as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF): "Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for leaving no one behind." The AFSD 2025 outcomes will contribute regional input to the 2025 HLPF, which will be convened in New York from 14 to 23 July 2025 and will review the below listed set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) noting that Goal 1 is considered every year:

- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The Arab regional consultation on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development are convened annually by ESCWA in consultation with its regional partners in preparation for the HLPF. This year's regional consultation places a strong focus on environmental solutions for advancing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.

II. Objectives and processes

The consultative meeting aims to enhance regional approaches to implementing the SDGs under review in 2025, namely SDGs 3 (good health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 14 (life below water) and 17 (partnerships).

It seeks to foster discussions on science-based, inclusive, and environmentally sound solutions to achieve these goals. By fostering dialogue, the meeting aims to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative approaches, promoting regional cooperation and collaborative solutions to address common issues. Specific focus will be given to addressing conflicts, crises, and their aftermath, which necessitate resilient reconstruction and recovery efforts.

Thus, the objectives of the meeting are to:

- Facilitate discussions among stakeholders on innovative environmental solutions to address poverty, improve health outcomes, achieve gender equality, stimulate sustainable economic growth, conserve marine ecosystems, and strengthen partnerships, building on regional and national initiatives and best practices;
- Highlight opportunities to scale up proven regional and national initiatives and integrate them into broader development strategies;
- Identify regional priority actions and means of implementation to accelerate progress on the SDGs under review.

The meeting will result in an outcome document highlighting the key messages to be presented to CAMRE, the AFSD and the HLPF this year to inform their discussions and decisions.

III. Topics to be discussed

The meeting will focus on advancing the environmental dimensions of the **2030 Agenda** by addressing progress, challenges, and opportunities for SDGs under review. Acknowledging the diverse levels of achievement across the region in attaining sustainable development goals, the discussions will emphasize the shared challenges, particularly those related to environmental and natural resource management.

For **Goal 3** (Health), while notable progress has been made in several indicators under this goal, mortality in the Arab region attributed to air pollution remains a pressing concern, according to the [Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024 \(ASDR 2024\)](#). Additionally, deaths linked to unsafe water and inadequate sanitation continue to pose significant risks, particularly in least developed countries and regions affected by conflict and instability. Discussions will focus on the urgency of implementing measures of remediation and innovative solutions to reduce water and air pollution and their impact on public health.

In **Goal 5** (Gender Equality), women in many countries in the Arab region, particularly in rural areas, play traditional and critical roles in resource management, including water collection, agriculture, and food production and processing. These roles place them on the frontlines of environmental challenges, making them disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of water scarcity, land degradation, and climate change. Also, women in poorer rural areas, who are employed in agriculture, have limited access to land and agricultural assets posing one of their greatest challenges in regions where economic activity heavily depends on land. Discussions will explore women's role in addressing environmental challenges. In addition, discussions will focus on innovative and inclusive solutions that are crucial to alleviating women's burden and empowering them as agents of change such as access to solar energy, mobile services, finance, and AI-driven tools, among others.

For **Goal 8** (Economic Growth), despite some progress on few targets under this goal, (Target 8.4.2, as per the ESCWA 2023 report on [Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region](#)), the Arab region is not on track to achieve SDG 8. It is losing ground or stagnating on several key indicators (ASDR 2024). This reinforces the critical role of the circular economy, which focuses on designing systems that prioritize the reuse and recycling of materials, thereby reducing environmental impact and fostering a more sustainable and inclusive economic model. Moreover, stimulating economic activity in rural and remote areas is essential, including strategic infrastructure development, incentives for foreign and domestic investment, and increased social support to informal and agricultural workers (ASDR 2024). Discussions will address the opportunity that economic diversification and circular economy offer to accelerate this goal through increasing resource efficiency, reducing waste and restoring ecosystems, while creating new green jobs and wealth.

Meanwhile, **Goal 14** (Life Below Water) highlights progress in expanding protected marine areas (Target 14.5.1) and securing access rights for small-scale fisheries, as per the ESCWA 2023 report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region. However, assessing the Arab region's overall progress on SDG 14 remains challenging due to significant data gaps, particularly on the sustainability of fish stocks, the adoption of ecosystem-based approaches, and the impacts of ocean acidification. Wastewater treatment rates across the region vary widely, from as low as 11% to 100% in the 15 countries with available data. Treatment remains insufficient in least developed and some middle-income countries, especially those affected by conflict, exacerbating marine pollution. Despite these challenges, most countries have established national marine research institutes and academic programs, contributing modestly to regional and global scientific collaboration (ASDR 2024). Discussions will cover countries' experience in implementing nature-based solutions, such as mangrove restoration and sustainable fisheries to accelerate progress on SDG 14, while also linking marine health to economic development, contributing to improving livelihood, and enhanced public health outcomes.

Finally, on **SDG 17**, the discussions will highlight the best regional practices and opportunities for scaling up proven initiatives and fostering inclusive and effective partnerships to ensure science-driven and actionable solutions that leave no one behind.

IV. Participants And registration

The consultative meeting brings together government experts from Arab countries, practitioners, and civil society members involved in the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as concerned regional and international organizations and representatives from civil society and the private sector.

Invited and nominated participants are kindly requested to complete their registration by **Wednesday, 15 January 2025** via Indico, the United Nations Events and Conferences Platform, through the following link:

https://indico.un.org/e/Consult_Meeting_Env_Dimension_2025_Science-based_Solutions

Indico registration instructions

New users

- Step 1. Set-up a new user account.
- Step 2. You will receive an account activation link by email. Follow the link to activate your account.
- Step 3. Fill in the Registration Form - Consultative Meeting on Science-based and Inclusive Environmental Solutions for Advancing SDGs Implementation.

Returning users

- Step 1. Use your username and password to login.
- Step 2. Fill in the Registration Form - Consultative Meeting on Science-based and Inclusive Environmental Solutions for Advancing SDGs Implementation.

Recommended browsers for using Indico are Chrome, Firefox and Microsoft Edge.

Sponsorship for in-person participation is available for a limited number of government representatives and contributing experts based on UN Financial Rules and Regulations. Requests for sponsorship must be received in Indico no later than **Wednesday, 15 January 2025** to be eligible for consideration. Participants requesting sponsorship must **upload a copy of their national passport** when completing their Indico registration.

V. Organizational issues

Date and Venue

The consultative meeting will be held in-person on 25 and 26 February 2025. The meeting location and venue will be shared with participants once confirmed.

Registered participants are also able to join the proceedings virtually through the Zoom platform. Onsite registration will start on 25 February at 9:00 am and the opening session will begin at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will close on 26 February at 4:30 pm.

Language of the meeting

The meeting will be conducted in the Arabic and English languages.

Accommodation, transportation and entry visas

A logistical note will be shared with confirmed participants.

VI. Correspondence

Kindly contact the following focal points should you have any queries related to the meeting:

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Ms. Sara Daniel
Research Assistant
Climate Change and Natural Resources
Sustainability Cluster
Beirut, Lebanon
Tel.: +961 1 978 514
Fax: +961 1 981 510 / 2
Email: sara.daniel@un.org

League of Arab States

Ms. Nair Alaa Eldin
Environment Officer
Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers
Responsible for the Environment
Cairo, Egypt
Tel.: +20 225 750 511 (extension: 3556-3506)
Fax: +20 225 761 017; +20 225 740 331
Email: nair.ehsan@las.int