Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade
Beirut, 18-19 May 2022

Information note

1. Background

Global processes

In December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution A/RES/71/222 proclaiming the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, commonly referred to as the Water Action Decade. The Decade aims to advance sustainable development and integrated water resources management to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolution decides that this should be pursued through cooperation and partnerships at all levels with focus on the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives.

In December 2018, the UNGA adopted Resolution A/RES/73/226 deciding that the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade will be convened as the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 from 22 to 24 March 2023, coinciding with World Water Day. The resolution also encourages the organization of activities in support of the Decade at the global, regional and country levels; it requests the Secretary-General, with the support of UN-Water, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and other entities of the United Nations system, to prepare a report to assess progress in the implementation of the first half of the Decade; and decides that the conference will be preceded by regional and global preparatory meetings and informed by existing water-related meetings at the regional and global levels.

The resolution also requests the United Nations President of the General Assembly (PGA) to convene a high-level meeting in 2021 to promote the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda to support the Decade and inform the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on the outcomes. The meeting was held on 18 March 2021 in New York and included contributions from many Arab States.

In December 2020, the UNGA adopted Resolution A/RES/75/212 which details the modalities of the midterm comprehensive review conference. It decides that the conference should report on progress made in implementing the Decade's objectives, identify possible obstacles in achieving them and pinpoint innovative ways to support their implementation and accelerate progress. It also reaffirms that the conference will be preceded by regional and global meetings and that preparations should include a review process. The resolution also announces that the Conference will be co-hosted by the Governments of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The PGA will convene a preparatory meeting during the fourth quarter of 2022 to set the themes and structure of the midterm comprehensive review in March 2023.

Regional processes

The Water Action Decade has been well-received by Arab States given the centrality that freshwater scarcity and water security play in advancing sustainable development in the region. This is demonstrated by
resolutions and recommendations adopted by Arab States in intergovernmental and regional forums, including by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources and regional initiatives, forums and consultations on water.

Specifically, the AMWC at its 10th Session (Kuwait, May 2018) adopted a resolution that encourages Arab States and stakeholders to share their best practices and efforts to advance the water-related dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to disseminate their activities on the Water Action Decade knowledge platform (Resolution 171, General Session 10, AMWC, 2/5/2018). Additionally, in its 12th and 13th sessions (Cairo, November 2020 and October 2021, respectively), the AMWC invited Arab States and the Council’s Technical Secretariat to engage with ESCWA to prepare for the midterm comprehensive review of the Decade, and invited ESCWA to support Member States to engage in the Decade and coordinate regional preparations for its comprehensive midterm review through an Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting in May 2022 in Beirut, with the results of the meeting contributing to the global midterm review in March 2023 (Resolution 239, General Session 13, AWMC, 18/11/2021).

In parallel, the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources at its 12th session (Amman, March 2017) adopted a recommendation asking ESCWA to support the Water Action Decade, finance member State participation in related activities, and assist member States in achieving water-related SDGs. At its 13th and 14th sessions (Beirut, June 2019 and September 2021 respectively), the committee asked ESCWA to support member States in their work in achieving the Water Action Decade objectives and coordinate regional preparations and engagement for the comprehensive midterm review by organizing a Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting and by participating in regional forums.

Moreover, the regional preparatory meeting on water issues, which was convened a week after the launching of the Water Action Decade (Beirut, 28–29 March 2018) and informed the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, resulted in an outcome document that consolidated regional views and priorities on water-related issues facing the Arab region. Four priority areas were identified: (1) Strengthening integrated water resources management to cope with water scarcity; (2) Enhancing cooperation on shared water resources; (3) Water is a core component of climate change adaptation and natural disaster risk reduction; and (4) Access to water services for all through improving water-related infrastructure.

In response to these requests, ESCWA established a regional inter-agency, multi-stakeholder Water Action Decade consultation group to support regional preparations for the midterm comprehensive review. The consultation group is comprised of designated representatives of regional and international organizations as well as United Nations organizations that serve in the Technical Scientific and Advisory Committee of the Arab Ministerial Water Council, members of the Regional Collaborative Platform/Issues-based Coalition (RCP-IBC) working on water issues, and members of the UN-Water Regional Discussion Group for Arab States. Several of these organizations convened regional meetings and events that fostered understanding and engagement in support of the Water Action Decade. These events contributed to the Arab Regional Roadmap of events that have led up to this regional midterm comprehensive review.


More information about the regional preparatory processes and regional roadmap leading to the Water Action Decade midterm comprehensive review are available at: https://www.unescwa.org/water-action-decade
2. **Objectives**

The **Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting** for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade will be convened prior to the United Nations’ 2023 Water Conference that serves as the global Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade in March 2023 to consolidate regional progress on internationally agreed water-related goals. This will ensure that Arab priorities are reflected in the global review by providing regional input to the report of the Secretary General and to the United Nations’ 2023 Water Conference. Furthermore, the outcome of the meeting will also inform regional decision and policy making structures such as the Arab Ministerial Water Council.

The objectives of the meeting are thus to:

- Assess regional progress on internationally agreed water-related goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030 Agenda and the dedicated water goal (SDG 6).
- Identify existing challenges and gaps in the region in achieving internationally agreed water-related goals and targets.
- Discuss enablers (policies, innovation and technology, financing, partnerships, data generation, knowledge dissemination, networking, capacity development among others) that can support accelerating the implementation of water-related goals and targets in the region.
- Present outcomes of national and regional initiatives, innovations and key actions that demonstrate commitment of Arab countries to internationally agreed water-related goals.
- Inform regional decision and policy making structures and mechanisms on water-related opportunities, challenges and achieved progress in the Arab region to better plan the way forward.
- Encourage member States and other stakeholders from the region to announce voluntary commitments to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals at this meeting and at the United Nations’ 2023 Water Conference, which constitutes the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade.
- Inform the preparation of an outcome document that reflects regional priorities on water-related issues and opportunities to inform the global process, including the UN Secretary General Report for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade.

3. **Agenda**

The agenda for this **Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting** will focus on assessing regional progress on water-related goals and identifying main gaps and opportunities. Given that water is a cross-cutting theme with ramified impacts at social, economic and environmental levels, water-related goals are addressed under several global agendas, namely Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Paris Agreement, Financing for Development among others. The format of the meeting is designed to ensure that all water aspects and important development issues with key associated sectors are covered during the meeting discussions. Plenary sessions comprised of presentations and interactive discussions will be included, in addition the organizers will entertain requests for side events organized by regional and international organizations and other stakeholders on specific water-related topics. Requests for side events should be submitted by **14 April 2022** stating organizers, duration, anticipated number of participants, required facilities and relevance to the objectives of the Water Action Decade.

The agenda will feature discussions on the:

- Progress achieved in advancing sustainable development and integrated water resources management to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Key messages from the outcomes of events contributing to the Arab Regional Roadmap for the Water Action Decade
- Strengthening water governance at the national and transboundary levels.
Cooperation among water dependent sectors.

Water and climate resilience and disaster risk reduction.

Accelerating progress through improved knowledge, partnerships, cooperation, financing, research and innovation.

Regional and country commitments, case studies and initiatives towards achieving internationally agreed water goals in the Arab region.

Expressions of interest to contribute to one of the topics above by sharing success stories or case studies relevant to the implementation of the Decade or highlighting new initiatives and partnerships as commitments to be brought to the United Nations’ 2023 Water Conference can be submitted to the organizers by **14 April 2022** by emailing ESCWA-H2O@un.org. Expressions of interest should be limited to 2 pages, provide full information of the submitting organization and focal point, and be written in the Arabic or English language.

**4. Participants**

Representatives of Arab member States are invited to participate in the meeting, as well as senior representatives from relevant regional and national organizations, institutions, academia, private sector and civil society organizations engaged in water-related issues affecting Arab States. International experts will be invited to contribute to the discussions.

**5. Partnerships and Processes**

This **Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting** for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade is organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the League of Arab States and the members of the consultation group for the Water Action Decade.

The outcome of this preparatory meeting will be conveyed to the Arab Ministerial Water Council and will be used to inform the global process for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade in March 2023.

**6. Date and venue**

The **Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting** for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade will be held in hybrid format from 18 to 19 May 2022 at the United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon and online. Registration will commence at 8:30 am on Wednesday, 18 May 2022 and the opening session will convene at 9.30 a.m. on the same day. The meeting will conclude by 5:00 pm on Thursday, 19 May 2022.

Participants are kindly asked to bring photographic identification on the first day of the meeting and to allow sufficient time to pass through security to collect their identification badge. Access to the United Nations House is provided through the Gibran Khalil Gibran Garden pedestrian entrance.

The meeting will also be broadcasted and made available for view for those who have pre-registered for the meeting.

**7. Additional information**

Further information and background materials on the meeting is available at: [https://www.unescwa.org/events/arab-regional-preparatory-meeting-midterm-comprehensive-review-water-action-decade](https://www.unescwa.org/events/arab-regional-preparatory-meeting-midterm-comprehensive-review-water-action-decade)
8. *Language of the meeting*

The meeting will be conducted in the Arabic and English languages. Simultaneous interpretation from and into Arabic and English will be provided.

9. *Registration*

Regional partners and interested stakeholders from Arab States are welcome to submit their registration for the regional preparatory meeting for onsite or virtual participation via Indico at [https://indico.un.org/e/WaterActionDecadeBeirut](https://indico.un.org/e/WaterActionDecadeBeirut) by **Thursday, 28 April 2022**.

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<tr>
<th>Indico registration instructions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New users</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1. Set-up a new user account.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2. You will receive an account activation link by email. Follow the link to activate your account.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3. Fill the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade registration form.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Returning users</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1. Use your username and password to login.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2. Fill in the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade registration form.</td>
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Please make sure to upload a clear personal photo in colour to allow ESCWA to issue your building access badge in case you wish to attend the meeting in person.

**Recommended browsers** to complete the Indico registration form are Chrome, Firefox and Microsoft Edge.

Designated officials from Arab States are kindly invited to upload their letter of nomination to the Indico registration portal.

A limited budget is available for the sponsorship of officials and representatives from Arab States through generous funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and UN-Water. Sponsorship includes roundtrip travel to Beirut, a daily subsistence allowance to cover hotel, meals and incidental expenses for up to three nights, and a terminal allowance to facilitate ground transportation to and from the airport. Roundtrip tickets will be issued in economy class on the least expensive route, in accordance with United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations.

Requests for sponsorship must be received by ESCWA no later than **Thursday, 14 April 2022** to be eligible for consideration. Requests for sponsorship must be indicated at the time of registration and include a copy of the national passport. Participants approved for sponsorship will be asked to complete a bank detail form to allow for the electronic transfer of their sponsorship entitlements following the meeting. Due to the limited funds available, priority will be given to participants providing interventions to the meeting. In addition, sponsorship will be limited to only one representative per ministry or organization.

10. *Virtual participation*

Participants wishing to participate virtually, must indicate virtual participation on their registration form. The meeting link and further guidance on how to virtually join the meeting will be shared with registered participants a few days ahead of the meeting. Kindly bear in mind that time for remote interventions is strictly limited.
11. Accommodation and transportation

Participants are requested to arrange their own hotel reservations by directly contacting a hotel of their choice in Beirut. A list of hotels that offer reduced rates will be provided to participants registered for onsite participation in the meeting. Participants are requested to arrange their own local transport between the airport, hotel and the United Nations House. It is recommended to arrange airport pick-up with the selected hotel.

12. Entry visas

Participants are requested to secure their own visas for travel to Lebanon, as may be necessary. ESCWA can coordinate with the Government of Lebanon to assist in obtaining entry visas for participants who are unable to secure visas in their home countries. Those who need assistance in this matter should send a colour, scanned copy of their national passport containing all the required information to the ESCWA secretariat no later than Thursday, 14 April 2022.

13. Correspondence

Inquiries and all correspondence should be directed to the following email: ESCWA-H2O@un.org