



Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/SDPD/2019/WG.46/INF.1
31 October 2019
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting on Mainstreaming Climate Action into National Development Planning in the Arab Region
Amman, 25-27 November 2019

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

Arab States are facing many challenges that are hampering their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Climate change and climate variability are among the key challenges and are imposing additional stresses on the region. The Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) projects that the average temperature in the Arab region will increase by 2.6°C to 4.5°C by the end of the century compared to the pre-industrial period, and that the region has already experienced an average increase in warming of 1.5°C. This is well above the global average. The assessment also finds that extreme climate events are becoming more frequent and that vulnerability to climate change is increasing across strategic sectors. This is threatening water security, food security, urban infrastructure, energy installations, ecosystems and human health, and affecting economic and social development and wellbeing. This demonstrates the need for coherent policies and increased investment to enhance climate resilience in light of SDG13, which aims to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and mainstream climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. Several Arab States have prepared Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) with the framework of the 2030 Agenda that present how they are addressing these interdependent challenges and planning the way forward.

In tandem, efforts are needed to inform and advance commitments agreed to under the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These commitments were reemphasized at the Climate Summit convened under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary General in September 2019. The Paris Agreement calls on developed and developing countries to submit successively ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that define their conditional and unconditional adaptation and mitigation commitments to support implementation of the Agreement. Globally, 184 countries have submitted their NDCs to the UNFCCC, including 21 Arab States. Arab States have put forth a broad range of measures for operationalizing these commitments, including through water, energy and transport sector policies and investments should adequate finance, technology and capacity building support be available. It is thus important to ensure that climate commitments articulated in NDCs are coherent with efforts being pursued under the 2030 Agenda and are reflective of the specific economic and social development needs and targets defined by countries at the national and local levels. Effective mainstreaming of climate change into national development planning thus necessitates efforts to integrate policy and budgetary frameworks, strengthen technical and institutional capacities, and improve coordination and engagement with relevant stakeholders to enhance coherence across commitments and mobilize resources.

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) are supporting Member States in their efforts to mainstream climate considerations into national development planning, including through instruments aimed at strengthening planning and financing

for climate-resilient development. Through the adoption of its *Climate Change Policy*, the IsDB is mainstreaming climate action in its operations by working with its Member Countries to enhance climate change resilience, support the transition to a green economy and leverage resources. By mandate of its member States, ESCWA established the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, which draws upon scientific findings to provide informed technical assistance and advisory services that strengthen national capacity, institutional frameworks and regional platforms for developing integrated climate policies and programmes. These efforts work to improve policy coherence and access to resources for strengthened climate action in Arab States.

II. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the Expert Group Meeting on Mainstreaming Climate Change in National Development Planning in the Arab Region is to enhance the capacity and knowledge of government officials from the Arab region on how to effectively mainstream climate action into national development plans. The meeting also aims to exchange knowledge and raise awareness on best practices and opportunities for mainstreaming climate action and NDCs into national development policies, strategies, programmes and practices. Specifically, the meeting aims to:

- Discuss barriers and gaps affecting the ability of countries to advance climate action through development planning, including access to finance, technology and capacity building;
- Identify entry points for integrating climate actions into national development and/or sectoral plans;
- Facilitate opportunities for the exchange of experiences and for South-South cooperation across diverse sectors on challenges, opportunities and instruments for mainstreaming climate considerations into national development planning;
- Build a knowledge sharing and dissemination network on aligning climate actions and NDCs with national development priorities; and
- Strengthen partnerships to advance implementation and climate action in the Arab region.

III. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

The meeting will feature plenary sessions and working group discussions on:

- Climate policy frameworks at the global, regional and national levels, including mandates and mechanisms for informing national policies, planning and budgeting
- Institutional frameworks and technical tools for integrating climate change into policy formulation and development planning in strategic sectors, with focus on the water, energy and transport sectors;
- National development plans, sector policies and NDCs in light of mechanisms for fostering complementary and coherence across these planning instruments;
- Lessons learned and good practices for pursuing coherence across climate change and sustainable development commitments and forging partnerships to advance implementation; and
- Opportunities for strengthening financial and non-financial resource mobilization for integrated climate action, including tools for supporting the timely and effective identification of finance and technology needs in planning and budgeting processes.

Time will be available for bilateral meetings and small group discussions on the second and third days of the meeting to allow for more in-depth discussions to share experiences and discuss partnership and financing opportunities.

Breaks for coffee and lunch will be arranged during the three-day meeting. The agenda will be circulated to registered participants.

IV. PARTICIPANTS

Participants shall be government officials from ministries responsible for planning, finance, water, energy, agriculture, transport and the environment from Arab States. Experts from development banks and institutions engaged in supporting climate action in the Arab region will contribute as resource persons. Approximately seventy participants are expected to attend the expert group meeting.

V. LANGUAGE

The expert group meeting will be conducted in the Arabic and English languages. Simultaneous interpretation between both languages will be provided.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The expert group meeting is jointly organized by the Islamic Development Bank and ESCWA. The three-day meeting will be convened at the Kempinski Hotel in Amman, Jordan from 25 to 27 November 2019. The meeting will begin at 9:00 am each day. The registration desk will open at 8:15 am on 25 November 2019 outside of the conference room.

VII. REGISTRATION

Invited participants and those nominated by their government are kindly requested to complete and return the meeting registration form to ESCWA by Wednesday, 6 November 2019.

Participants requesting financial support must return their completed registration form with a copy of their passport identification page to ESCWA by the deadline to be considered for financial sponsorship. Financial support covers the cost of roundtrip travel to Amman, a daily subsistence allowance for up to four nights in Amman, and a terminal allowance to facilitate airport transfers, as appropriate. Roundtrip airfare for sponsored participants would be arranged by ESCWA in economy-class on the most direct, least cost itinerary. Financial support is provided in accordance with United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations.

VIII. ACCOMMODATIONS AND AIRPORT TRANSFERS

A limited number of rooms are available at the Kempinski Hotel Amman. Rooms can be reserved through ESCWA on an availability basis if requested on the registration form. The hotel is located on Abdul Hamid Shouman Street in the Shmeisani area of Amman. The preferential room rate for the meeting is US\$ 117 (single occupancy) or US\$ 126 (double occupancy), inclusive of breakfast, internet and all taxes and service charges.

Airport transfers from the Queen Alia International Airport to Amman are available by taxi outside of the airport. The cost of a one-way transfer is JD 22 (approximately US\$ 33). Personalized airport pick-up and drop-off services can also be arranged directly through the Kempinski Hotel Amman at a rate of US\$ 50 each way. Currency exchange facilities are available at the airport in Amman.

IX. VISA

Participants are responsible for securing their own visa for travel to Jordan. ESCWA can provide registered participants with a personalized letter of invitation to facilitate the visa request process. ESCWA can also assist registered participants who do not have Jordanian consular services available in their country, and those who are facing special circumstances, with visa processing through our office in Amman. Kindly note that requests for visa assistance must be received at least three weeks prior to the date of travel to allow time for processing. Additional information is provided on the meeting registration form.

VII. DOCUMENTATION

- ESCWA, *Arab Region Progress in Sustainable Energy: Global Tracking Framework Regional Report* (2017), www.unescwa.org/publications/gtf-regional-report-arab-region-progress-sustainable-energy
- ESCWA, *Natural Gas Vehicle in Transportation in the Arab Region: Fact Sheet* (2017), www.unescwa.org/publications/natural-gas-vehicle-transportation-arab-region
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- ESCWA, *Moving towards Water Security in the Arab Region* (2019), www.unescwa.org/publications/moving-towards-achieving-water-security-arab-region
- IsDB, *Climate Change Policy* (2019), www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2019-04/IsDB%20Climate%20Change%20Policy.pdf
- IsDB, *Transport Sector Policy: Sustainable Transport for Inclusion and Prosperity* (2018), www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2019-04/IsDB_Transport%20Sector%20Policy.pdf
- RICCAR, *Arab Climate Change Assessment Report, Main Report* (2017) and Executive Summary (2018), www.riccar.org
- UNFCCC, *The Paris Agreement* (2015), <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
- UNFCCC, *Interim NDC Registry* (2019), <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/Pages/Home.aspx>
- United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

VIII. CONTACTS

For inquiries or further information, kindly contact the following meeting focal points:

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