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United Nations Development Account Project
Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying
Integrated Water Resources Management Tools

Workshop on Developing the Capacities of the Human Settlements Sector for Climate Change Adaptation
Using Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Tools
Amman, 22-24 May 2016

ESCWA Opening Statement

Mr. Khaldon Khashman, Secretary General of the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA),

Mr. Saad Abo Hammour, Secretary General of the Jordan Valley Authority,

Mr. Ali Subah, Assistant Secretary General for Strategic Planning at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation of Jordan and former Chair of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources, Distinguished Director Generals, Board Members and Directors of Water Utilities in Arab States,

Dear representatives from ministries responsible for water services in Arab States,

Esteemed experts and members of the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET),

Fellow colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), I am pleased to welcome you to this "Workshop on Developing the Capacities of the Human Settlements Sector for Climate Change Adaptation Using Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Tools," which is being organized by ACWUA and ESCWA.

The workshop is conducted within the framework of the United Nations Development Account project entitled "Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying Integrated Water Resources Management Tools." The project is coordinated by ESCWA and implemented in partnership with the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) of the League of Arab States, ACWUA, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Western Asia (UNEP/ROWA), and the World Health Organization Centre for Environmental Health Action (WHO/CEHA).

The project aims to develop region-specific training materials on climate change adaptation in five key sectors, namely the environment, agriculture, health, human settlements and economic development.

The United Nations Development Account was established to support capacity building in member States on key and emerging issues. Last year, the global community repeatedly recognized the need to combat climate change and reduce the impact of water-related disasters for the achievement of sustainable development. This was articulated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which was adopted in March 2015 in Japan; the Paris Agreement that emerged from the negotiations undertaken by the 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2015; and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted by the global community in September 2015.

Indeed, while SDG-13 specifically aims to “[s]trengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries” and to “[i]ntegrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning,” the importance of climate change adaptation in *cities* is specifically referenced in Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” To achieve this goal, Target 11.5 aims

“By 2030, [to] significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations”

To achieve this target, SDG-11.b aims:

“By 2020, [to] substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

Other global commitments also specifically reference to the water services sector, such as SDG-6, which aims to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, and the Paris Agreement adaptation agenda. And as we well know, in the Arab region, adaptation is all about water.

Distinguished experts,

The five training modules on climate change adaptation under preparation within this project aim to help build regional capacity for the achievement of the aforementioned global commitments. They also draw upon the methodologies and findings generated under the “Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on *Water Resources* and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region” (RICCAR), which is a United Nations-League of Arab States effort that is coordinated by ESCWA and implemented in cooperation with over a dozen organizations. This capacity building project on climate change adaptation thus benefits from the regional climate modeling, hydrological modeling and vulnerability assessment tools developed under RICCAR for informing climate change policy in the Arab region.

This workshop thus aims to build the capacity of Arab States to consider the effects of climate change on cities and the delivery of water services within the regional context, including the effects of water scarcity and water-related disasters such as floods. To do so, we aim to foster interactive discussions on how climate change assessment, integrated water resource management tools and adaptation measures can help to alleviate the effects of climate change on human settlements.

This gathering thus also provides an opportunity for senior officials and experts to build our collective regional, national and local level knowledge of climate change assessment and response measures for informing adaptation action. Indeed, ACWUA and ESCWA look forward to drawing upon your inputs, experiences and best practices to support the finalization of the draft training module on human settlement within the Arab regional context.

Esteemed colleagues,

In closing, I would like to thank the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and ACWUA for kindly hosting us here in Amman. I would also like to thank the distinguished decision-makers and experts gathered here today for their participation and contributions to this workshop and to the finalization of the training manual. Thanks are also extended to my ESCWA colleagues for their extensive efforts in preparing for this regional workshop. I wish you fruitful discussions and a pleasant stay in Jordan.

Thank you.