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**Building Capacity for Accessing Disruptive Technologies for Improved Water
Resources Management under Climate Change**

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Shared Prosperity **Dignified Life**



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

Allow me to extend to each of you a very warm welcome to this joint ESCWA-World Bank meeting on Accessing Disruptive Technologies for Improved Water Resources Management under Climate Change.

We are pleased to welcome such a diverse group of experts from ministries, water authorities and institutes responsible for water resources management and monitoring in the Mashreq region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Countries in the Mashreq region face varying degrees of water stress and water quality concerns, which are further complicated by climate change and a large ratio of transboundary waters resources. More than half of current freshwater withdrawals exceed what is naturally available in some countries and total water productivity in the region is only about half the world's average.

With climate change, this is only expected to worsen; greater stress from extreme and unpredictable weather patterns will continue to affect water resources that will only in turn worsen water scarcity and challenge water security in the region.

The Arab region has already experienced an average increase of 1.5°C warming. Our climate projections under the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), show that average daily temperature may increase by 4 to 5 °Celsius by end-century, and that extreme climate events are becoming more frequent. Vulnerable groups are among the most impacted.

The freshwater scarcity situation in some countries of the region is also aggravated by other factors, such as high dependency on transboundary water resources and conflicts that affect the ability of people to access water and sanitation services. Added to this is water pollution, non-revenue water losses in ageing water systems and service intermittency.

The Inventory of Shared Water Resources in Western Asia, a joint effort between ESCWA and the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) concluded that more than 70% of Western Asia is part of a transboundary surface or groundwater basin. In many of these basins data is often lacking, incomplete or inaccessible where data from different countries can be contradictory, often because there are no unified standards for measuring hydrological changes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To overcome these regional challenges, opportunities exist to scale up the adoption of new technologies and accelerate positive innovations throughout the region. This will require a “new water consciousness” amongst governments and citizens which recognizes the responsibility of each stakeholder to move towards a more sustainable management of this precious resource, and in turn increased understanding of the benefits that innovation can present to overcome these regional challenges.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 called for such a new approach based on integrated innovative solutions that are sustainable and inclusive. This is manifested in the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda’s 17 Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) and their targets and means of implementation. Of particular relevance to this meeting are SDGs 6 and 13. SDG6 aims to ensure availability and sustainability of water and sanitation for all, and SDG 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. It is important to highlight that achieving the 2030 Agenda SDGs is highly dependant on strengthening appropriate means of implementation including finance, capacity-building, technology, and data, monitoring and accountability.

Disruptive technologies fall within these means of implementation and offer new sources of information for improving water resources management. Awareness of and access to these innovative technologies can help governments both benefit from and cope with water resource challenges under dynamic climate conditions. Disruptive technologies can also facilitate more integrated approaches to water resources management that allow for work across sectors by “disrupting” or modifying traditional ways of management.

Disruptive technologies can also enhance the science-policy interface by providing new tools and additional analysis to enrich decision-making processes in water resources management. This is facilitated by innovation during the data collation stage benefiting from big data of various scales from remote to in-situ, and through the analysis stage and the use of knowledge tools and products that benefit the end user in making more informed and timely decisions for the management of water resources under increasingly dynamic environments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting complements ESCWA’s broader work on Climate change and water resources management.

On climate change, it complements our work through the Arab Center for Climate Change Policies (ACCCP), established by mandate from Member states.

The ACCCP aims to strengthen the capacity of Arab States in better understanding and addressing climate change implications for sustainable development. This includes assessments of climate change impacts on water and water-dependent sectors, adaptation and disaster risk reduction, mitigation, as well as technical and capacity building support to climate negotiators, climate finance, technology and tools for climate analysis.

Furthermore, access to Arab regional knowledge and information on climate data and analysis generated under RICCAR is supported by an electronic platform, the RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub, hosted by ESCWA.

On water resources management, ESCWA has been long involved on enhancing knowledge on transboundary water resources through knowledge products such as the *Inventory of Shared Water Resources in Western Asia* and the Arabic-English glossary of terms used in the area of transboundary water management. This is complemented by supporting progress on transboundary cooperation through regional training in collaboration with regional and international partners.

ESCWA also hosts the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET), a network of research institutes, training centres, and experts engaged in the application of IWRM concepts. The network also fosters exchange and engagement in joint activities through thematic working groups on IWRM monitoring, water footprints, water integrity, and climate change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish us all a fruitful two days and hope that we will together be able to identify challenges, opportunities, and innovative approaches for utilizing disruptive technologies and climate projections for improved water resources management in the Mashreq region.

Given the complexity of our task in this meeting, we have a packed agenda for the coming two days whose success hinges largely on your participation. I look forward to an engaging discussion and wish us all a successful meeting.

Thank you