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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Regional Consultation on Climate Change for the 2019
Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum
Beirut, 21-22 March 2019

Information note

1. Background

Global processes

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development was established based on the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "The Future We Want," in 2012. The Forum first met in 2013 and has become the main United Nations platform through which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are monitored and reviewed at the global level. The consultations undertaken during the sessions of the Forum result in the adoption of negotiated political declarations.

The HLPF meets annually under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and closes with three-day ministerial segment. Every four years the HLPF is also convened by the United Nations General Assembly at the level of heads of States. The 2019 session of the HLPF will thus be convened in two parts: first from 9 to 18 July 2019 under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and then from 24 to 25 September 2019 under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. One political declaration will be negotiated for adoption in September 2019. A United Nations Climate Summit will also take place on 23 September 2019.

The theme of the 2019 session of the HLPF is "Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality." Six SDGs are reviewed during each of first four sessions of the HLPF, along with Goal 17 which is considered each year. The six goals under review during this cycle are:

- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

As part of the follow-up and review functions of the HLPF, member States are invited to provide a voluntary national review (VNR) of progress achieved in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Six Arab States have offered to present their VNRs during the 2019 session, namely Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Mauritania and Tunisia.

More information on the HLPF is outlined in United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/290 and can be obtained from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>.

Regional processes

The HLPF is preceded by five regional sustainable development forums, which are convened by the United Nations Regional Commissions. The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) is convened by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in partnership with the League of Arab States. The forum is coordinated through the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Arab Region, which is comprised of the League of Arab States and United Nations organizations serving the region.

The AFSD allows for regional-specific discussion regarding implementation challenges, common concerns and priorities for advancing progress towards the SDGs. Arab States and representatives from civil society participate in the forum. Previous sessions of the AFSD were held in Amman (April 2014); Manama (May 2015); Amman (May 2016); Rabat (May 2017); and Beirut (April 2018).

The 2019 AFSD will be convened in Beirut from 9 to 11 April 2018. It will be organized under the same theme as the HLPF, namely “Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality.” The forum is expected to put into context regional progress and challenges related to the achievement of the SDGs, with special focus placed on empowerment, inclusiveness and equality across the 2030 Agenda as well as the six SDGs under review during the 2019 review cycle.

To support these global and regional consultations, ESCWA and the League of Arab States collaborate with partners to organize sector-specific expert consultations to inform the AFSD and HLPF proceedings. In 2019, this includes the organization of regional consultations on the environment and climate change.

2. Objectives

The objective of the Regional Consultation on Climate Change for the 2019 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum is to consolidate regional views on climate change issues and priorities facing the Arab region. The aim of the expert group meeting is to issue a joint outcome document that will be conveyed for consideration at the AFSD and will support Arab States in their preparations for the HLPF. The objectives of meeting are thus to:

- Exchange experiences among Arab States on incorporating climate-related goals and targets in VNRs and national policies and plans, including experience in monitoring and reporting on the dedicated goal focused on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13);
- Foster dialogue on the interlinkages between SDG 13 and other climate-sensitive goals related to food security (SDG 2), water (SDG 6), energy (SDG 7), cities (SDG 11) and sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), as well as the other SDGs under review during the 2019 HLPF cycle;
- Consider the policy dimensions of these interlinkages and the means of implementation, namely access to technology, finance and capacity development, that are or should be made available to advance climate action in the Arab region;
- Examine and formulate a common regional position and set of priority issues of concern related to climate change and its impacts; and

- Prepare an outcome document on climate change issues related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for delivery to the AFSD and to support regional preparations for the HLPF in 2019.

3. Agenda

The agenda will foster regional dialogue with a view to preparing a regional outcome document on priority issues. The agenda will feature plenary and working group discussions on:

- Regional issues and challenges affecting efforts to combat climate change and its impacts in the Arab region, including an overview of progress to date and socio-economic policy interlinkages;
- Lessons learned by Arab States in integrating climate change measures and disaster risk reduction targets in their VNRs and development policies, strategies and plans at the regional, national, local and sector levels;
- Means and mechanisms for strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity for advancing climate action, including through climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation, impact reduction, meteorological services, preparedness and negotiations;
- Opportunities for advancing progress through means of implementation, including through technology, finance and capacity development, with special attention paid to the needs of women, youth and vulnerable groups; and
- Drafting of an outcome document on climate change issues and priorities for the Arab region.

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

A side event will be organized during the consultation to commemorate World Water Day, which is celebrated each year on March 22nd. The theme of this year's World Water Day is on "Leave No One Behind". The event will feature the regional launch of the *2019 United Nations World Water Development Report* which focuses on the same theme. Other side events may also be organized over the course of the two days.

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 and civil society organizations engaged in climate-related issues affecting Arab States. International experts and organizations will be invited to contribute to the discussions.

5. Partnerships and Processes

The regional consultation is organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the League of Arab States by mandate of the Fifth Session of the ESCWA Executive Committee (Beirut, 18-19 December 2018). The consultation is organized within the framework of activities conducted by the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies at ESCWA. Support for the consultation is provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through its support for climate-related projects and initiatives serving Arab States.

The outcome document of the Regional Consultation on the Environment and Natural Resources for the 2019 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum, being organized by the League of Arab States, the United Nations Environment Programme and ESCWA in Cairo from 27 to 28 February 2019, will also inform this regional consultation on climate change.

The outcome of these regional consultations will be conveyed to the AFSD (Beirut, 9-11 April 2019), which will include a special session focused on SDG 13, and result in a final report that will be formally submitted to the HLPF.

The outcome document on climate change will also be shared with Arab Ambassadors to the United Nations and League of Arab States; the Arab Group of Climate Change Negotiators convened under the auspices of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (April 2019); the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology (April 2019); the Arab Ministerial Water Council (June 2019); Sixth Session of the ESCWA Executive Committee (June 2019) and the intergovernmental ESCWA Energy Committee and ESCWA Committee on Water Resources. It is expected that these outcomes would thus help to inform regional preparations for the 2019 HLPF session.

6. Date and venue

The Regional Consultation on Climate Change for the 2019 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum will be held from 21 to 22 March 2019 at the United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon. Registration will commence at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, 21 March 2019. The meeting will conclude by 6:00 pm on Friday, 22 March 2019.

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.

7. Language of the session

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

8. Registration

Designated officials, interested participants and regional partners are kindly invited to submit their completed registration form to the ESCWA secretariat by Monday, 25 February 2019. A colour, scanned passport-like photograph should be submitted with the registration form to allow for issuance of an identification badge to access the United Nations House.

A limited budget is available for the sponsorship of officials and representatives from Arab States. Sponsorship includes roundtrip travel to Beirut, a daily subsistence allowance to cover hotel, meals and incidental expenses for up to three nights in Beirut, 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 Monday, 25 February 2019 to be eligible for consideration. Requests for sponsorship must be indicated on the registration form and include a copy of the national passport.

9. Entry visas

Participants are required to secure their own visas for travel to Lebanon, as may be necessary. A personalized letter of invitation can be provided by ESCWA for nominated participants to facilitate the visa request process. Lebanese visa and entry requirements are available at the following site: <http://www.general-security.gov.lb/en/posts/65>.

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 to the ESCWA secretariat no later than Tuesday, 19 February 2019 as visas may take four weeks to process.

10. Accommodation and transportation

The Markazia Suites hotel is located two blocks (five-minute walk) from the United Nations House and offers preferential room rates to meeting participants. The single room rate is US\$ 106/night and the double room rate is US\$ 128/night, inclusive of breakfast, internet access and all taxes. Airport pick-up can be arranged with the hotel management for US\$ 24 in cash (paid to the driver). Additional information, as well as the names of other hotels offering preferential room rates in Beirut, can be provided to registered participants upon request.

11. Correspondence

Inquiries and completed registration forms should be submitted to the following officials:

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