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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group meeting on Tracking Progress Towards Sustainable Energy-
Horizon 2030 in the Arab region,
Cairo, Egypt, 14-15 May 2017

Information Note

Within the context of its work on sustainable energy the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) is organizing an Expert Group meeting (EGM) on “Tracking progress toward the sustainable energy- Horizon 2030 in the Arab region” to be held on the 14-15 May, 2017, at the Semiramis Intercontinental Hotel, Cairo, Egypt.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires countries to pursue concerted and accelerated action on sustainable energy in their national programmes in order to reconcile the growing need for energy services with mitigating the impacts of energy resource development and use. This situation calls for profound and immediate changes in how energy is produced and consumed.

The Arab region comprises 19 countries, divided into four subregions, with a population of 372.1 million in 2014, representing 5.1% of the world’s population. The region has wide variations in natural resources, while water scarcity and food security are major challenges overall. Income and wealth vary widely, leading to an economically diverse region comprising high and middle-income countries, with a combination of exporters and net importers of energy, as well as three least-developed countries (LDCs) with high levels of energy poverty.

In 2014, the Arab region accounted for 5.1% of the world’s total primary energy supply, 7.8% of its carbon dioxide emissions, and 5.6% of global GDP, much generated in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) subregion. Fossil fuels still dominate much of the region’s primary energy mix. Arab economies account for some 40% of the world’s proven crude oil and around a quarter of global natural gas reserves, and are major net exporters of energy to international markets. Fast-growing energy demand in the region, coupled with prospects of the Middle East becoming a global economic center by 2030 alongside the Asia-Pacific region, drives the need to diversify energy sources and to move to a more sustainable energy sector to improve energy efficiency and minimize environmental impacts.

In this context, the “Global Tracking Framework (GTF)” Global report will be launched by early April 2017. This report, which includes as well Arab regional profile, measures how the world is progressing toward SE4All, tracking country-level progress and challenges, and includes complementary material steering energy decisions such as energy security, regional cooperation, investment decisions and economic instruments.

Additionally, the “Arab Regional report” as a specific report developed for the first time by the UN-ESCWA

with support of the World Bank and SE4ALL will be disseminated during the EGM to seek inputs and feedback before its launching in Astana within the framework of the 8th International Forum for Sustainable Energy (11-14th June,2017).

II. SCOPE

This EGM falls under the strategic framework of UNESCWA on strengthening the capacity of Governments of the Member States on mainstreaming the energy-related SDGs and Paris Agreement into their national development plans and help them demonstrate progress, develop, implement, and monitor fact-based sustainable energy action plans.

The GTF measures how the world is progressing towards SE4All, tracking country-level indicators for EA, RE and EE. The SE4All has three interlinked objectives to be achieved by 2030:

- Ensure universal access to modern energy services
- Double the global rate of improvement in EE
- Double the share of RE in the global energy mix

This EGM will explore the progress of the region sustainable energy efforts in line with SDG2030 and how governments interpret key elements of sustainable energy and potential action forward and share their view and approach towards a sustainable energy future. It will also highlight the policy challenges and success factors on a country level.

III. OBJECTIVES AND TOPICS OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING

The objectives of this EGM are to focus on each country and sub-region to:

- Identify differences and similarities between countries' approaches and understandings of sustainable energy today and in the future
- Recognize key milestones, major uncertainties and risks in the Arab countries and sub-regions for achieving sustainable energy future in 2030 and beyond
- Collection of ideas for policies to support achievement of sustainable energy in 2030 and beyond
- Increase alignment of member States' national plans with the energy Sustainable Development Goals

IV. FOCUS AREAS

The EGM will focus on defining the predetermined elements, the major uncertainties and key challenges that face the Arab countries sustainable energy future, and by putting as objectives, the energy related sustainable development goals, at the Arab regional level and the country level. The focus areas of the EGM:

- Discuss the gaps between policies in place today and the targets set for a sustainable energy future
- Debate the role of energy efficiency, low-carbon technologies (renewable energy, nuclear, others), and fossil fuels in future energy mixes
- Discuss the nexus between energy and other areas such as water, food, climate, economic growth, and how to link crosscutting concerns in policy design
- Discourse how can uncertainty about the future energy system be reflected in policymaking, such as in the formulation of adaptive policy pathways
- Brainstorm on the policy options to lead a sustainable energy pathway
- Highlight the major trends in terms of Energy Access, Renewable energy and Energy Efficiency

V. PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the EGM will include the members of Energy Committee, Energy experts as well as representatives of international organizations. The Participants will have the opportunity to update the panel on the accomplishments of their relative countries in terms of energy sustainability, climate change and energy policy.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The EGM will be held at the Semiramis Intercontinental Hotel, Cairo, Egypt from the 14th to 15th May 2017. Registration will be from 8.00 to 9.00 am. The relevant agenda will be provided soon.

An Arabic / English interpretation will be available.

VII. LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

Each participant shall undertake the following preparation related to her/his participation in terms of securing hotel reservation in the venue location, visa, and any other requirements for travelling to Egypt.

Participants can obtain their visas to Egypt from the Egyptian embassy in their respective countries. In case of needing an assistance to obtain the entry visa, ESCWA can provide the participant with a supporting letter, upon his request.

Any update Information will be provided to participants in due course.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCES

All correspondence related to the EGM is to be sent to either of the below addresses:

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