

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA**

World Summit on Sustainable Development  
Johannesburg, 26 August-4 September 2002

**THE EFFECTS OF PEACE AND SECURITY ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE ESCWA REGION**

Briefing Papers

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## PREFACE

On the occasion of holding the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002, and in light of the lack of necessary information in Arabic regarding the strategies, policies and actions needed to achieve sustainable development in the region, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), as a continuation to its efforts in the field, has issued a number of Briefing Papers identifying primary issues regarding sustainable development in the region. ESCWA trusts that the enclosed Briefing Papers will provide all those concerned with appropriate information on issues of vital importance to the process of achieving sustainable development in the Member States.

The Summit aims to emphasize international commitment to achieving sustainable development through:

1. Assessing implementation of Agenda 21;
2. Reviewing the challenges and opportunities to achieve sustainable development;
3. Suggesting actions and required institutional and financial arrangements to achieve sustainable development;
4. Identifying means to support institutional structures nationally and regionally.

Throughout the past years, ESCWA has incorporated the proposals set out in Agenda 21 into its various activities, especially in the fields of energy, water and environment. As a result, ESCWA has published numerous technical documents, has held various expert group meetings and has provided its Member States with technical assistance and advisory services in the field.

Within the preparations for the forthcoming WSSD, ESCWA -in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) in the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA)- has held various preparatory meetings which ultimately led to the preparation of the regional assessment report identifying the achievements and requirements of sustainable development in the Arab region, the Arab Ministerial Declaration, and the Joint Arab-African Ministerial Declaration. ESCWA has furthermore prepared a number of publications, namely; a study on sustainable development planning in the region, a regional assessment report on the achievements and constraints to sustainable development, and a study on governance and the institutional framework for achieving sustainable development in the region.

In this regards, ESCWA has issued some 18 Briefing Papers that deal with the themes that were set out in Agenda 21. The Briefing Papers could be divided into three main sections:

**The First Section in the Field of Energy:** Contains ten papers displaying the possibilities of achieving sustainable development in the field including: (1) The


ESCWA energy sector characteristics in the region; (2) Energy and Agenda 21: the objectives and progress achieved in its implementation; (3) The challenges and opportunities for achieving a sustainable energy sector; (4) The activities undertaken by ESCWA in the field of energy and sustainable development; (5) Development of renewable energy technologies and application; (6) Efficient and rational use of energy in the building sector (domestic and commercial); (7) Efficient and rational use of energy in the industrial sector; (8) Greenhouse gas abatement in the ESCWA transport sector; (9) Greenhouse gas abatement in the ESCWA power sector; and (10) Energy and Gender perspectives in sustainable development.

**The Second Section in the Field of Water:** addresses the most important issues to achieving sustainable development in the water sector and the provision of sufficient water to meet the economic and social developmental needs. This section includes: (11) Water and Agenda 21, Chapter 18; (12) An integrated management of water; (13) Water supply management; and (14) Water demand management.

**The Third Section in the Social and Economic Fields:** takes into account the actions undertaken in the regional preparation of the WSSD and the issues of utmost social and economic concern in the region's States, including: (15) Role of ESCWA in regional preparations for the WSSD; (16) The effects of peace and security on sustainable development in the ESCWA region; (17) The effects of socioeconomic inequity on sustainable development in the ESCWA region; and (18) The effects of poverty and unemployment on sustainable development in the ESCWA region.

The abovementioned Briefing Papers were prepared by ESCWA and selected regional specialists, to be published sequentially prior to the WSSD in Johannesburg. Furthermore, ESCWA will issue a booklet containing summaries of the 18 Briefing Papers in the English version.

ESCWA trusts that these efforts contribute to shedding light on the important strategies, policies and mechanisms needed to achieve sustainable development in the region, and provide the Arab leaders, decision makers, researchers, and media persons with a simple and explicit review of the possibilities and means to achieve sustainable development, including the institutional and technical actions required for such an achievement. The Briefing Papers aim to identify priority issues to be discussed during the WSSD, and the degree to which these issues relate to the needs and perceptions of ESCWA countries, in order to assist Member States in deciding their positions towards the issues presented at the Summit and assessing the possibilities of implementing its recommendations and programmes.

  
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Executive Secretary

Beirut, 16 / 4 /2002

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
NPT	Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNSCO	United Nations Special Coordinators Office
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US\$	United States dollar

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Rio Declaration states in Principle 24 that "Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development." This is nowhere more apparent than in the ESCWA region, where wars and conflicts have set back sustainable development gains, generating repercussions for the region as a whole. While the decade since the Earth Summit has brought calm to parts of Western Asia, the lack of equitable peace and security has been a major constraint to achieving sustainable development.

The early 1990s witnessed the end of the Second Gulf War, the unification of North and South Yemen, the end of the Lebanese civil strifes and the first Intifada, as well as the beginning of the Middle East Peace Process. Subsequent efforts were largely geared towards overcoming the legacies of war and making up for lost decades of development. However, in the 1990s, only three countries in the ESCWA region achieved per capita incomes that were greater than those in the previous decade. Post-war sanctions against Iraq have negatively affected education, public health, nutrition and mortality in the country, and have had regional economic repercussions. September 28th, 2000 marked the beginning of the Al Aqsa Intifada and the practical halt to the Middle East Peace Process. The ensuing violence, and the closure policies negated much of the sustainable development progress made in the Palestinian Territories, in housing, health, education, infrastructure and agriculture during the years following the Oslo Accords. The September 11th attacks in the USA, and heightened concerns about international terrorism, have had serious global repercussions and have significantly affected tourism, trade and investment region wide. These violent conflicts have also created waves of refugees, internally displaced persons and marginalized groups, as well as new social, economic and environmental challenges for ESCWA Member States.

Peace and security in the ESCWA region necessitates more than the settlement of border disputes and basic human security guarantees. Water and food securities are increasingly becoming more important priorities for ESCWA Member States. The lack of regional peace and security directly hinders the sustainable and effective management of shared water resources and ecosystems. Efforts to remedy damages to marine, coastal and urban environments caused by regional conflicts must be subject to post-conflict resolutions. The social and environmental disturbances of informal settlements, refugee camps and displaced communities will not be adequately addressed until peace and security are achieved in the ESCWA region.

This brief reviews the main issues, trends and challenges that characterize the effects that advances and set backs in achieving peace and security have had on sustainable development in the ESCWA region over the past decade. A platform of priorities for action is subsequently formulated to identify key components of sustainable development that should be addressed within the realm of regional peace and security, during the coming ten to twenty years.

## II. WARS, STRUGGLES AND CONFLICTS

War and violent conflicts entailed devastating consequences on sustainable development in the ESCWA region, with gains achieved during intermittent periods of calm often lost during set backs in regional peace and security. The loss of life, income, health, infrastructure and the serious deterioration of education, skills and welfare were enormous and are compounded by the increasing needs of marginalized and displaced populations, and by the opportunity costs of lost decades of development, high military spending and accumulated debt. This legacy has placed significant pressure on Governments in the ESCWA region, and poses a challenging baseline ESCWA Member States must cross to proceed towards sustainable development.

***The Palestinian and other Arab occupied territories.*** Instability resulting from the cycles of violence of the Arab-Israeli conflict is perhaps the most challenging threat to regional progress towards peace, security and long-term sustainable development in the ESCWA region. In 1993, the Oslo Accords and ensuing establishment of the Palestinian National Authority brought significant promises and opportunities to Palestine and to the region as a whole. Although the initial stages were difficult, due largely to frequent Israeli closure policies in 1992-1996, economic growth was positive as new investments and development assistance flowed in. By 1999, Palestinian per capita income had increased to US\$ 1,760 with GDP growth recorded at 7.4 percent.

By September 2000, however, the tide had changed. The socio-economic and environmental impact of hostility, border closures and mobility restrictions generated a sharp decline in economic activities, high unemployment and increased poverty. The World Bank recorded GDP growth in 2000 to have fallen by -6.2 percent, virtually overturning the gains made the previous years, with a further 12 percent decline estimated for 2001. Per capita income is 30 percent lower in 2002 than it was in 1994. Worker remittances have fallen by 40 percent, and unemployment is now estimated at 25 to 35 percent, more than double than what it was before the crisis. The United Nations Special Coordinator's Office (UNSCO) estimates that total income losses to the Palestinian economy from October 2000 to September 2001 alone range between US\$ 2.4 to US\$ 3.2 billion.

Unaccounted for property losses include the destruction of orchards, olive trees, farms, factories, businesses, schools and homes, further eroding Palestinian sources of livelihood and welfare. The environmental effects of damage to public infrastructure have yet to be assessed. According to an UNCTAD study, internal closures have effectively divided the West Bank into 54 isolated areas, with loss of mobility, restricting access to raw materials and imports, and generating losses to exports and tourism revenues. The World Bank estimates that the share of the population living below the poverty line climbed to 40-50 percent, by the end of 2001, while a recent survey of household incomes indicates that 10 percent of West Bank households have

lost all sources of income since September 2000, while 48 percent report a loss of over 50 percent of their usual income since the recent uprising began. The situation in the Gaza Strip is estimated to be worse. In addition, the humanitarian situation is increasingly dire, as more people become homeless, disabled, injured, sick and destitute. Every segment of the population has been affected, especially children and youth.

Regionally, the negative impact of the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been tremendous. The conflict has generated a large population of Palestinian refugees, numbering over 2.5 million outside of Palestine. Many refugees continue to live in camps and exert pressure on scarce resources in neighbouring host countries. Moreover, the recent escalation of violence has suppressed tourism to the region, which has hurt Egypt and Jordan given their high dependence on tourism revenues for foreign exchange and employment. The on-going conflict has also weakened intra-regional trade and dampened investor confidence in the region. Moreover, issues over shared water resources have yet to be resolved, and negatively affect water availability, agriculture, municipal consumption and sustainable use in riparian countries.

**Lebanon.** Lebanon was ravaged by 17 years of civil strife ending in 1991. It has suffered from 22 years of Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, ending only in May 2000, with the withdrawal of Israeli forces. The civil strife created a dismal baseline from which Lebanon was forced to begin its path towards sustainable development. Displaced persons, destroyed factories and communities, degraded agricultural land and depleted natural resources are among the legacies of the civil strife. The violent conflict also exacerbated pollution problems, which resulted in solid and hazardous waste hotspots littering the coastal zone, and untreated wastewater dumped into rivers and the sea.

However, since the end of the war, Lebanon has made impressive achievements in restoring government authority and bringing about stability. Peace enabled the government to reconstruct Beirut and opened the way to rehabilitate sewage, sanitation and public utilities and infrastructure throughout the country. Economic recovery was sustained during the early 1990s. However, regional instability and unresolved conflicts in South Lebanon and Palestine continue to plague the country and have stymied economic recovery and progress towards sustainable development since early 2000.

Continued hostilities in South Lebanon -during and following the occupation period- have prevented the comprehensive reconstruction of Lebanon. During the occupation, thousands of Lebanese fled fertile agricultural lands in the South to live in suburban slums around Beirut; these communities are now in the process of resettlement. Furthermore, the last three major Israeli attacks prior to withdrawal left civilian utilizes and infrastructure, electricity plants and bridges destroyed, eroding confidence in a fast economic comeback. Obstacles to progress towards sustainable development



in the South include: landmines and the removal by Israeli forces of topsoil from agricultural areas. Nevertheless, the Government of Lebanon has developed a Five-Year Plan for Southern Lebanon outlining immediate needs, with emphasizes on its reintegration and inclusion in national frameworks. However, while the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon is a positive step, several issues remain unresolved, including the disputed Shebaa farms area, with its important water resources, and the status of more than 350,000 UNRWA-registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

***Golan Heights.*** The Golan Heights have been occupied by Israel continuously since 1967. Much of the indigenous Syrian population fled during the 1967 and 1973 wars, leaving Israel to establish 33 settlements in the area. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force has provided peacekeeping support since 1974.

The Golan Heights region holds important water resources feeding into regional water supplies, thus having a strategic role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The resolution of the disputed sovereignty on the Golan Heights is key to sustainable development in Syria, the Palestinian occupied territories as well as in other riparian states such as Jordan. Furthermore, destruction from wars and occupation remain visible in the Golan Heights: the town of Quneitra is still in ruins and landmines continue to pose a threat to inhabitants, albeit efforts to remove the mines and to enhance mine awareness have been continuous.

***Gulf War and the sanctions.*** The impact of the second Gulf War and the post-war sanctions regime has been disastrous for the region as a whole. Prior to the Gulf Wars, Iraq's social and economic indicators were generally above the regional averages, with GDP per capita at US\$ 3,510 in 1988. Healthcare reached about 97 percent and 78 percent of urban and rural populations respectively, prior to 1991, and 90 percent of the population had access to an abundant quantity of safe drinking water. Iraq, by regional and developing countries standards, was relatively prosperous.

The damage sustained by Iraq during the second Gulf War resulted in the virtual standstill in its production, due to the destruction of the industrial and services sectors of the country. The sanctions regime, albeit somewhat alleviated by the oil-for-food programme, has not allowed Iraq to repair, or adequately maintain, its industrial and commercial facilities. Agricultural production is constrained due to lack of quality seeds and fertilizers, and to difficulties that have been compounded by the drought of recent years. GDP per capita in 1995 was estimated at US\$ 715, in stark contrast to pre-conflict levels. Inequalities in income, poverty and nutrition are prevailing now in the three primary regions of Iraq. Baghdad continues to enjoy utility services, whereas rural communities suffer from shortages in drinking water, electricity and adequate nutrition. The World Food Program estimates that access to potable water is now at 50 percent of the 1990 level in urban areas, and is 33 percent lower in rural areas. Health centres and hospitals remain without adequate maintenance, and have difficulty operating due to water and electricity shortages. Children suffer from high rates of malnutrition, low school enrolment and high infant mortality rates. UNICEF reports

that in the last ten years, maternal mortality has become the leading cause of death for women of reproductive age in Iraq. Malnutrition in central and southern Iraq is widespread.

There have been several environmental consequences of the second Gulf War in Iraq as well. These include: the release of heavy smoke and pollutants into the atmosphere from fires; the contamination of soils and the marine environment due to the destruction of oil wells, oil storage facilities, refineries and electric power stations; the large-scale disturbance of the soils, especially in southern Iraq, due to military operations, and the possible health effects of exposure to depleted uranium from weaponry used during the war.

The regional environmental implications of the second Gulf War have also been significant and have affected Kuwait and the eastern Gulf region. During the War, oil escaping from the exploded wells accumulated in a number of oil lakes, penetrating the soil underneath, contaminating land and some aquifers. An estimated 6-8 million barrels of oil were poured into the sea, polluting hundreds of kilometres of Gulf coastline. Over 600 oil wells were set to fire at the end of the war, and were very slowly extinguished in 258 days, creating a thick and toxic cloud of smoke over Kuwait, the health impact of which is not yet known. The soot and oil mist coming out of burning oil wells eradicated large areas of vegetation, while oil spills eradicated almost all living organisms in a wide surrounding area. The long-term environmental effects of the war are tremendous and may persist for decades. As such, quantifying Iraqi compensation to Kuwait for environmental damage caused by the war is among the standing issues to be negotiated in the international tribunal, established following the Gulf War to address compensation. Negotiations are expected to be completed by the end of 2002.

The second Gulf War, sanctions and the decline of the Iraqi economy have also negatively affected sustainable development regionally in socio-economic terms. The second Gulf War contributed to regional economic stagnation, as countries of the region dependent on Iraqi economic interaction lost businesses due to sanctions. Intra-regional trade suffered particularly, as did the ability of traders, students and experts to travel to and from Iraq. For example, the Jordanian transport sector shrunk considerably in the aftermath of the War, since much of its transport volume depended on Iraqi transactions.

**Yemen.** Emerging from almost 30 years of continuous armed conflict, Yemen has sustained extensive damage to production facilities and infrastructure, particularly during the 1994 civil war. As a result, Yemen is still the poorest of the ESCWA countries, and holds the lowest GDP per capita in the region. Yemen also suffers from the highest adult illiteracy rate, fertility rate and from the largest percentage of population aged between 01-15 years of age.

The second Gulf War resulted in the suspension of assistance from Gulf countries, as Yemen was assumed to have sided with Iraq during the war. Workers remittances plummeted, with the repatriation of almost one million Yemeni migrant workers from the Gulf countries, placing additional pressure on government services and infrastructure. The losses sustained during the Yemeni civil war were topped by the sharp drop in oil prices in 1997-98, and by the limited success in controlling Yemen's high population growth rate. These factors have been serious obstacles to sustainable development in the country.

Nevertheless, Yemen has made significant steps towards recovering from the setbacks of armed civil conflict and the second Gulf War. The Government made a strong effort to unify the government machinery and to improve governance. In 1995, the country embarked on an economic stabilization and adjustment programme, which has borne some positive results. In 1999 Yemen's Human Development Index (HDI) was measured at 0.468, which was higher than the 1990 HDI of 0.407, but still significantly lower than that of 1985, which reached 0.531. Natural reserves have also been established to protect rare ecosystems and traditional livelihoods.

However, despite this relatively positive performance, Yemen's unemployment and poverty rates remain high, amidst continued security concerns. Yemen's economy is still heavily oil-dependent, which is not a sustainable source of growth or employment. Agricultural production has been adversely affected by drought and water shortages, with the legacy of civil conflict and migration forcing trade offs in water allocation between growing urban centres and shrinking rural communities. Limited groundwater supplies are also being used at unsustainable rates, and are expected to be exhausted in about 20 years. Fishing by large foreign trawlers -that pay licensing fees to the national treasury- continues to deplete fish stocks. Tourism revenues have been suppressed by the history of kidnappings, bomb attack on the USS Cole, and the September 11th attacks in the United States. As such, much remains to be done to move the country closer towards sustainable development.

### **III. MILITARY SPENDING, NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND LANDMINES**

Domestic and international conflicts have propelled military expenditures, as almost half ESCWA Member States experienced war in the 1990s, while almost all countries have bordered another country experiencing war. Military expenditures, measuring about 7 percent of regional GDP in 1996, were detracted from sustainable development spending. Additionally, wars, military spending and reconstruction costs have imposed heavy financial burdens on all ESCWA Member Countries and have brought most into serious debt.

Regionally, no ESCWA Member Country possesses a confirmed nuclear weapons programme, and all ESCWA Member States are signatories to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The presence of Iraq's nuclear weapons programme remains disputed. However, considerable international concern exists

over Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programmes, as well as its potential development of a nuclear weapons programme. The nuclear capabilities of other ESCWA Member States is limited to research, such as Egypt and Syria. However, there is growing concern within the ESCWA region over risks from potential nuclear leakage from countries bordering the ESCWA region, particularly Israel. Israel is the only state in the Middle East that has not signed the NPT and has quasi-confirmed nuclear arsenal. There is also growing concern over aging nuclear facilities, such as Dimona nuclear reactor in Israel, that pose the risk of nuclear leakage, increased by earthquakes along the Rift Valley.

Landmines and unexploded ordnances constitute a significant obstacle to sustainable development to the region as well, and are of grave humanitarian concern. In Yemen, an estimated 100,000 landmines were laid in the Southern and Eastern regions of the country, reducing the country's already limited arable land (2.6 percent), and preventing access to water sources and grazing areas. An estimated 150,000 landmines were deployed throughout Lebanon as a result of the 1975-1991 civil strife and the occupation by Israeli forces of South Lebanon. However, the exact location of most of these hidden weapons remains unknown. A similar situation exists in the Golan Heights. In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, military sources estimate landmines to number over 300,000, contaminating nearly 15,000 acres of land. Most of which are situated in the Jordan Valley, Wadi Araba and the northern border in some of the country's most valuable farmland. Landmine accidents have caused injuries to more than 400 people in Jordan, the majority of them were civilian farmers.

Because de-mining is a long-term commitment, the building of appropriate local capacities and the mobilisation of funding to remove mines is of primary concern. Yemen, Jordan and Lebanon have all allocated resources to mine clearing: Yemen and Jordan signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines, and on their Destruction, in 1999 and 1998 respectively. Jordan's Royal Engineer Corps has already cleared 157 minefields, removing more than 65,000 mines. However, the existing de-mining capacities in the region are not sufficient to handle the problem, despite the assistance provided by the United Nations.

#### **IV. THE INDIRECT COSTS OF CONFLICT**

Military expenditures to purchase arms, and post-war reconstruction and resettlement costs have significant negative repercussions on public revenues and sustainable development. First, military budgets detract resources from spending allocated to achieve sustainable development goals, particularly during periods of fiscal austerity and uncertainty.

Secondly, instability and concerns over peace and security, reduce confidence in economic recovery and hinder trade and investment - particularly foreign investment. For instance, the September 11th attacks dampened trade and potential investments in

the region due to increased perceived political risks. The potential downturn in foreign direct investment (FDI) could slow sustainable development gains regionally, since FDI not only provides funds for economic and industrial development, but it can also generate technological spillovers benefits from investors providing know how and new technologies with their investment. The same holds true for trade. Concerns about regional stability, and the economic repercussions of the September 11th attacks, dissuaded many decision-makers, manufacturers and importers, considering trade with the region. Furthermore, intra-regional trade has suffered from West Bank closures, which have been particularly detrimental for Jordanian exports.

Finally, peace and security have long term positive impact on tourism and foreign exchange earnings. While the region's share of the world tourism industry is still small (amounting to 4 percent of the world total), the sector was steadily growing prior to the September 11th attacks and the recent escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Losses of tourism sector is having serious implications on public spending, employment, income generated from traditional handicrafts and on the ability of ESCWA Member States to allocate sufficient resources to implement sustainable development plans.

## **V. REFUGEES, DISPLACED AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS**

There is a large concentration of migrant labourers, refugees and displaced persons, surrounding urban centre in the ESCWA region, as results of violent conflicts in the region. This has prompted the emergence of shantytowns and camps, which lack access to adequate water, sanitation and electricity. Accordingly, while most large cities in the region suffer from rural-to-urban migration, many governments also must consider the needs of refugees, displaced populations and repatriated workers in development plans. Family networks can only moderately help to dampen additional pressure that these groups are placing on public services and the demand for social safety nets.

The second Gulf War resulted in the displacement of almost two million migrant workers, mostly Palestinians, Jordanians and Yemenis, who were no longer welcome to work in GCC states due to the positions taken by their respective governments. The ripple effects were manifested in higher unemployment rates, increased poverty, increased inflation rates and larger budget deficits. Conflicts in the ESCWA region have also created marginalized communities. According to UNRWA figures, Palestinian refugees in the Middle East number almost 4 million, of which one-third reside within Palestinian Territories. Refugees in host countries often face difficult socio-economic conditions, as most of them do not enjoy citizenship in the country where they reside, and oftentimes live in camps initially designed as short-term shelters. Displaced populations within Member Countries are also the source of concern, as displaced communities following decades of conflict face the challenge of resettlement. Women, children and the aged have also suffered and are oftentimes the most vulnerable groups during times of strife.

## **VI. REGIONAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

The environment does not respect political boundaries. As such, international negotiations and coordination are integral to the effective management of shared natural resources in the ESCWA region, such as water resources and ecosystems.

The need for cooperation on water resource management is very important for the ESCWA region. The three major rivers serving ESCWA Member Countries have over 80 percent of their waters originating from outside the region. This fact is a potential for conflict as water demands by upstream riparian countries grows, resulting in a reduced share of water for downstream users. For instance, Turkey's effort to construct dams along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are of particular concern to downstream users in Syria and Iraq, and a source of continuous tension.

Development agendas in Ethiopia and Eritria have direct implications for Nile River flows into Egypt. In the Levant, the Jordan River has five riparian nations: Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine. Efforts to exploit the Jordan and Yarmouk rivers (a tributary feeding the Jordan River) have changed the river into a trickling stream, leaving the quantity and quality of its water unsuitable for irrigation or adequate for municipal use.

Military occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, as well as the continuing conflicts in the Middle East, are major obstacles for sustainable development of water resources in the ESCWA region. Of the four aquifers in Palestine, two are shared, while the other two lie within the green line under Israeli control. These aquifers have become Israel's primary sources of drinking water and supply Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Increased demand for water has caused over-exploitation of groundwater, entailing increased salinity and deterioration of water quality. Within this context, water has become an issue for final status negotiations in the Middle East Peace Process. Non-resolution of water issues and the lack of agreement on sustainable management of shared fresh water resources are thus potential causes for conflict in the ESCWA region.

Tensions in the region, and lack of progress with Middle East Peace Process, have also hindered the sustainable management of ecological zones. Regional conflicts have inflicted serious damage to marine and coastal environments, particularly from oil spills and from disposal of debris. Moreover, destruction of key ecosystems hold the potential for causing conflict and creating environmental refugees affecting the livelihood of communities that are economically dependent on these zones.

A major act of habitat destruction in the region is the disappearance of the Mesopotamian Marshlands in Iraq, an environmental catastrophe that cannot be easily corrected in an era of post-war sanctions and unrest. The drainage of the Iraqi marshlands by Turkish dams and by Iraqi drainage projects, resulted in the loss of habitat and livelihood for the Marsh Arabs. A once sizable population of that region

was displaced, creating a large group of environmental refugees. The destruction of the habitat resulted in the large-scale extinction of several species. The desiccation of the area also removed the filter function of the marshes, resulting in over-fertilization of fisheries downstream, negatively affecting estuary and marine ecosystems of the Persian Gulf, and disrupting the economy of local communities. These wetlands were once the spawning ground for sea birds and resting station for migratory species.

Accordingly, peace and security in the ESCWA region will have to deal both with the lingering legacies of conflicts, as well as with new challenges arising from social, economic, demographic, and environmental pressures. Traditional political views of peace and security are no longer valid, if sustainable development is the ultimate goal. Security must now encompass common security along with human security, namely the concepts of non-military factors, such as social inequity, poverty, environmental degradation, migratory pressures and protection and management of shared natural resources; all these factors are as important as the military ones in resolving conflict. It is thus imperative that governments remain committed to sustainable development as part of their efforts to achieve peace and security in the ESCWA region.

## **VII. PLATFORM OF PRIORITIES FOR ACTION**

The regional consultation process in preparation for *the World Summit for Sustainable Development* involved the participation of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. The outcome of these consultations resulted in the following platform with respect to peace and security and their impact on sustainable development in the region.

### **A. CONFLICTS, STRUGGLES AND WARS**

Peace and security impacts progress in achieving sustainable development. Countries should develop programmes aimed at peaceful solutions that seek also social welfare and equality of opportunity for groups disadvantaged by war and conflicts.

The world community is called upon to take a proactive role in the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and is also requested to support the resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem. The international community should join to fight terrorism. It is affirmed that struggle against occupation is not an act of terrorism and is legitimate according to the United Nations charter. The international community is also asked to reconsider sanctions on Member States, as embargoes are particularly injurious for the poor. Countries responsible for loss and damage to natural resources during wars should be accountable for the cost of restoration; similarly those responsible for laying landmines should be responsible for their removal. The international community and the United Nations system should intensify efforts to eliminate nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East, in order to declare the area a nuclear-free zone.

## **B. REGIONAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

Water security represents a major challenge in the ESCWA region. ESCWA Member States are encouraged to adopt integrated water resources management, including demand management approaches. Countries are also encouraged to develop renewable and non-conventional water resources, and to intensify research on new water technologies. Member States should adopt an integrated approach to managing coastal and marine resources and strengthen regional cooperation. Water security should be addressed within a regional framework. The resolution of the conflicts on water rights in the Middle East should be made on the basis of United Nations resolutions. The United Nations and other international organizations are requested to play a catalytic role to work out regional agreements and forums on shared water resources, to provide further technical assistance in capacity building, and to assist in developing integrated water management policies.



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