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UNEP

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/SDPD/2011/WG.3/INF.1
30 May 2011
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting on Assessing Climate Change Impacts
on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Development
in the Arab Region
Beirut, 6-7 July 2011

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

The Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) in December 2007 called for the development and dissemination of methodologies and tools that assess the impacts of climate change and their extent in view of supporting the formulation of adaptation measures that are fully consistent with economic and social development goals. Following a series of regional and ministerial meetings, inter-agency collaboration was reinforced at the United Nations – League of Arab States 9th Sectoral Meeting on Climate Change in June 2009, which concluded with the agreement that the United Nations and League of Arab States and their specialized organizations would collaborate on the preparation of a vulnerability assessment on the impact of climate change on water resources.

This process led to the preparation of a Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability based on the outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting Towards Assessing the Vulnerability of Water Resources to Climate Change in the Arab Region (Beirut, October 2009), which was organized by the League of Arab States (LAS), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) with financial support from other organizations. The Regional Initiative is based on four pillars supported by a series of activities aimed at the following: (a) a baseline review; (b) impact assessment and vulnerability assessment; (c) awareness raising and information dissemination; and (d) capacity building and institutional strengthening. A project brief was subsequently submitted by the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), under the auspices of the LAS Secretariat, to the Arab Ministerial Water Council, which approved the project for implementation in July 2010.

The Regional Initiative was further articulated by Arab member states as well as United Nations and LAS organizations at the Expert Group Meeting on the Development of a Vulnerability Assessment for the Arab Region to Assess Climate Change Impacts on the Water Resources Sector, which was hosted by the LAS and ESCWA (Beirut, November 2010). The meeting discussed the integrated assessment approach for conducting the regional impact assessment and the vulnerability assessment, as well as the commitments and contributions of Arab Governments and regional organizations to support the initiative. The inter-agency Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Climate Change, led by UNEP/ROWA, subsequently mandated ESCWA to lead the coordination of the Regional Initiative. Within the framework of this partnership, ACSAD regularly reports to the Arab Ministerial Water Council on progress achieved in implementing this joint initiative.

II. SCOPE

This Expert Group Meeting on Assessing Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Development in the Arab Region is the third in a series of meetings aimed at implementing the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region. Previous meetings consolidated the approach and partnerships associated with the implementation of the Regional Initiative. Discussions related to the integrated assessment component are elaborated in a reference document prepared by ESCWA entitled *Assessing the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region: A Methodological Framework for Pursuing an Integrated Assessment*. The document builds upon previous expert group meetings and outlines the integrated assessment approach based on five components: (a) global circulation modeling; (b) regional climate modeling; (c) regional hydrological modeling; (d) socio-economic vulnerability assessment; and (e) integrated mapping.

This expert group meeting will focus on the first three components of the methodological framework. As such, it will provide an opportunity to exchange experiences and coordinate approaches for global and regional climate modelling as it relates to the water sector in the Arab region. It is expected that the experiences of regional climate centres based in the Gulf and North Africa will be exchanged, as well as those of international organizations. This will be complemented by a discussion of different emissions scenarios that are being used by the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) as the basis for their next assessment report (AR-5).

In view of supporting the regional climate modelling component of the initiative, the sensitivity analysis undertaken to support the definition of an Arab Domain for framing regional climate modelling efforts in the region will be presented. It is expected that the Arab Domain once finalized will be introduced as a formal domain within the COordinated Regional Climate Downscaling EXperiment (CORDEX) in view of encouraging additional work on regional climate modelling in the Arab region based on a common set of criteria and guidelines.

Preparations for the regional hydrological modelling component of the project will also be incorporated in this meeting through a discussion of metadata related to the monitoring, collection and management of hydrological information in Arab member countries that are used to support climate and hydrological modelling activities. This will not only help in drawing lessons learned to support the development of a regional knowledge platform, but will also assist in identifying resources available to support the validation of assumptions and projections from the climate and hydrological modelling components of the project by Arab member states.

III. OBJECTIVES

The expert group meeting will seek to:

- (a) Exchange information on current climate change modeling activities in the region;
- (b) Select the emissions scenarios that will be used for generating climate change projections;
- (c) Discuss the delineation of the Arab Domain for regional climate downscaling to the Arab region; and
- (d) Define criteria for developing a regional knowledge management platform for meteorological and hydrological information based on experiences gained at the national level.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting is organized as a collaborative effort by United Nations and League of Arab States regional and specialized organizations within the framework of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region. It is implemented by the League of Arab States, ESCWA and UNEP/ROWA. The meeting is organized to support the coordination of activities and exchange of experiences on work being undertaken in the region within the framework of the Regional Initiative.

V. PARTICIPANTS

Government representatives from ministries responsible for water resources and climate change modeling in the Arab member states are invited to participate in the meeting. Regional climate centers, as well as global and regional institutions engaged in climate modeling at the Arab regional level are also welcome to participate and share their experiences. This includes United Nations and League of Arab States specialized agencies and partner institutions responsible for implementing projects and activities related to the Regional Initiative.

Government representatives who are nominated by their ministries are kindly requested to send to ESCWA their letter of nomination and the attached registration form. Requests for sponsorship must be received by ESCWA no later than 15 June 2011 by checking the sponsorship box on the completed registration form. Interested institutions and partner organizations are welcome to participate in the meeting at their own cost. ESCWA can assist in making hotel reservations in Beirut at a preferential rate if so requested on the registration form. All participants are requested to complete and submit to ESCWA the attached registration form by 30 June 2011.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Date and venue: The two-day meeting will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon from 6 to 7 July 2011 in Committee Room 1 on the B1 level. Access to the building is provided from the Riad El-Solh Square entrance.

Language: The meeting will be conducted in the English language.

Accommodation and transportation: More information about hotel reservation will be provided at a later stage in the logistical information note that will be distributed to registered participants.

Visas: Participants requiring an entry visa for Lebanon are kindly requested to secure their visas from the Lebanese Embassy in their respective country of residence. In case where there is no Lebanese Embassy available, kindly inform ESCWA at least three weeks prior to travel so that assistance can be provided. In such cases, please provide ESCWA with your completed registration form and a copy of your passport as well as other relevant information no later than 15 June 2011.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence and inquiries concerning the expert group meeting should be addressed to:

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For additional information, please visit the meeting website at:
<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1608E>