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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations
Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)
Cairo, 16-17 October 2011
League of Arab States, Egypt

INFORMATION NOTE

1. *Background*

In its resolution A/RES/64/236 of 31 March 2010, the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (4 to 6 June 2012). This date marks twenty years since the adoption of Agenda 21 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. It also comes ten years after the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was convened in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 and resulted in the adoption of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).

The objectives of the conference are:

- To secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development;
- To assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development;
- To address new and emerging challenges.

The conference will focus on two main themes, namely:

- A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;
- The institutional framework for sustainable development.

The Arab countries have achieved progress in building institutions and mechanisms for addressing sustainable development priorities in the region. The *Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sustainable Development* and *The Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region*, presented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, have provided the regional framework for coordinated action on sustainable development over the last decade. Focused activities have since been implemented on promoting peace and security, strengthening the institutional framework, supporting poverty alleviation and addressing other regional priorities related to population and health; education, awareness, scientific research and technology transfer; natural resources management; sustainable production and consumption patterns; as well as globalization, trade and investment. These activities have been implemented and monitored under the auspices of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), its Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), and its Technical Secretariat comprised of the League of Arab States, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA).

As part of its mandate to lead regional preparations for this global event, ESCWA has partnered with the League of Arab States and UNEP/ROWA to organize this meeting, which will be held from 16 to 17 October 2011 at the League of Arab States Headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, in accordance with resolution 341 adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) at its twenty-second session (Cairo, December 2010). The meeting will be held prior to the thirteenth session of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Countries (JCEDAR), which will take place from 18 to 20 October 2011 at the League of Arab States Headquarters. These meetings are held back-to-back in view of forwarding the outcome of the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting to JCEDAR for consideration and submission to CAMRE for endorsement at its twenty-third session, which will be held from 21 to 22 December 2011 in Cairo.

A series of consultative meetings, workshops and seminars are being organized prior to the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting in view of soliciting the views of Arab Governments, major groups and regional organizations on the conference objectives and themes. The aim of these meetings is to raise awareness about Rio+20 and support the preparation of a clear and consolidated outcome document at the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting. This regional contribution will then be submitted to the UNCSD Bureau for inclusion in the global preparatory process for Rio+20.

2. Objectives of the meeting

The Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting aims to support Arab preparations for Rio+20 by offering a forum for deliberation and consensus building on a consolidated set of issues and priorities that reflect the Arab vision on the objectives and themes to be addressed at Rio+20.

The objectives of the meeting are to:

- Review progress achieved and gaps in implementing the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and the outcomes of major summits on sustainable development;
- Identify new and emerging issues affecting progress towards sustainable development in the Arab region;
- Examine green economy opportunities and challenges facing the Arab region in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;
- Consider the institutional framework for sustainable development in the Arab region;
- Formulate recommendations on the conference objectives and themes in view of renewing the political commitment to sustainable development.

The deliberations will result in a set of outcomes, findings and recommendations that will be reflected in the meeting report. This report will be submitted to the UNCSD Bureau by the 1 November 2011 deadline in view of ensuring an Arab regional contribution to the global compilation document for Rio+20 and Arab input to global preparations for Rio+20.

It is also expected that the meeting report will be considered by JCEDAR at its thirteenth session and CAMRE at its twenty-third session, and will contribute to the preparation of an Arab ministerial declaration reaffirming political will to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region.

3. Scope of the meeting

The meeting will formulate the perspectives and positions of the Arab region on the objectives and themes of Rio+20. The meeting will discuss a number of reports, some of which have been prepared pursuant to the CAMRE Resolution 341 at its twenty-second session, namely:

- Report on the progress achieved in implementing the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region;
- Regional Review of Institutions for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region;
- Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development and International Environmental Governance;
- Regional report on Green Economy in the Context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development - Principles, Opportunities and Challenges in the Arab Region;
- Report on progress to date and gaps in the implementation of international commitments on major summits on sustainable development;
- Report on new and emerging challenges facing the Arab region.

Other reports will also be provided to inform deliberations, including outcomes from regional consultative meetings on Rio+20. Documentation will be made available on the meeting website when ready.

4. *Organization of the meeting*

The meeting is organized as a collaborative effort between ESCWA, League of Arab States and UNEP/ROWA within the framework of Arab regional preparations for Rio+20. It is one of several preparatory meetings being organized by the various United Nations regional commissions to support regional preparations for Rio+20, as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly.

5. *Registration of participants*

Government representatives from the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development are invited to participate in the meeting. Regional organizations engaged in Rio+20 preparations 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, financial institutions, civil society, private sector, academic institutions, in addition to partner organizations responsible for implementing projects and activities related to the objectives and themes to be addressed at Rio+20.

All participants are requested to register online through the following link: <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNUM=1545E>, no later than 15 September 2011. Registered participants will receive confirmation that their request for registration is approved in order to ensure their access to the League of Arab States during the two-day meeting.

6. *Administrative issues*

Date and venue: The two-day meeting will be held at the League of Arab States Headquarters, located in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt from 16 to 17 October 2011.

Language: Both Arabic and English will be used at the meeting and simultaneous translation will be provided.

Travel: Sponsored participants will receive their tickets from the organizers, while non sponsored participants are responsible for arranging for their own travel to Egypt.

Accommodation: All participants are responsible for arranging for their own hotel accommodations in Egypt. A list of hotels close to the meeting venue will be made available on the meeting website.

Visas: The League of Arab States will provide assistance to participants requiring an entry visa to Egypt in countries where an Egyptian Embassy is not able to provide that service. All participants requiring a visa should send a clear coloured scanned copy of their passport showing all relevant information by e-mail to the League of Arab States address mentioned below in the correspondence section. Request for visa support must be received at least one month prior to the expected date of arrival, and no later than 15 September 2011.

7. Correspondence

Correspondence and inquiries concerning the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting should be addressed to:

ESCWA

Ms. Roula Majdalani
Director
Sustainable Development and Productivity Division
UN-ESCWA
Beirut, Lebanon
Fax: + 961-1-981 510/511/512
Tel.: + 961-1-978 501 (Direct)
E-mail: majdalani@un.org

Mr. Riccardo Mesiano
First Economic Affairs Officer
Productive Sectors Section
Sustainable Development and Productivity Division
UN-ESCWA
Beirut, Lebanon
Fax: + 961-1-981 510/511/512
Tel.: + 961-1-978 568 (Direct)
E-mail: mesiano@un.org

League of Arab States

Mr. Djamel Eddine Djaballah
Director
Department of Environment, Housing and
Sustainable Development
League of Arab States
Cairo, Egypt
Fax: 00-202-5743023
Tel.: 00-202-5750511 (3613)
E-mail: Envsusdev.dept@las.int

Ms. Shahira Wahbi
Chief, Sustainable Development and International
Environmental Cooperation
Environment, Housing, and Sustainable
Development Department
League of Arab States
Cairo, Egypt
Fax: 00-202-5743023
Tel.: 00-202-5750511 (3663)
E-mail: environment.dept@las.int

Webpage of the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting:
<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNUM=1545E>

For additional information on Arab regional preparations for Rio+20, please visit:
<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1570E>

For additional information on global preparations for Rio+20, please visit: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>
