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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Regional Preparatory Meeting Series for Rio+20: Workshop
on Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development
in the Arab Region
Jeddah, 3-5 October 2011

INFORMATION NOTE

1. *Background and justification*

The “institutional framework for sustainable development” (IFSD) constitutes one of the thematic focus areas of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, also known as Rio+20), which is being organized in 2012 in order to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges.

The issue of IFSD has been raised repeatedly in major summits on sustainable development, starting from the Earth Summit in 1992, but also ten years later during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in an effort to identify the institutional reforms needed to address emerging challenges of sustainable development. In the Arab region, countries have responded to global calls to mutually reinforce the three pillars of sustainable development by restructuring their national and regional institutional setups, and they have registered numerous developments on that front. However, a significant gap still remains in developing a fully integrated approach to environmental, social and economic policy-formulation and decision-making in the Arab region, which presents a major hurdle for its long term development.

On the other hand, there is currently a growing debate on the best institutional governance system for the environment at the international level, and a number of reform options are expected to be debated at Rio+20, such as reviewing and enhancing the mandate of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and UNEP. These potential reforms will have repercussions on the Arab region that need to be addressed.

As such, and as part of a series of national and regional preparatory meetings for Rio+20* targeting different stakeholders, the current workshop aims to discuss with sustainable development institutions in the Arab region the needed reforms to the institutional framework for sustainable development at the national, regional and global levels in light of new and emerging challenges.

* A list of Arab preparatory meetings and workshops for Rio+20 can be found in the Annex to this information note.

2. Objective

The objective of the workshop is to:

- Discuss existing institutional framework in the Arab region at the national and regional levels, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and identify possible reforms to address emerging challenges facing sustainable development;
- Help Arab countries to position themselves in relation to the issue of international environmental governance, which is being negotiated as part of Rio +20, building on the outcomes of the Solo Dialogue;
- Prepare a position statement on the above issues as input to Arab Preparatory Conference for Rio+20 (Cairo, 16-17 October 2011).

3. Focus areas

The workshop will cover the following focus areas:

- National experiences in the Arab countries in terms of institutional framework for sustainable development;
- Findings of the ESCWA Regional Review of Institutions for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region;
- Findings of the UNEP study on institutional framework for sustainable development;
- Outcomes of the Solo Dialogue;
- Institutional reform options based on national and regional specificities;
- Roadmap to Rio+20.

3. Participants

Representatives of national committees for sustainable development in the Arab countries – where they exist – or alternatively representatives of the main bodies responsible for sustainable development and follow-up on preparations for Rio+20, are the primary beneficiaries of this workshop. Concerned advocacy and civil society groups may also be invited to attend. Sustainable development experts from the region and abroad shall be invited to participate as resource persons.

4. Cooperating agencies

The Presidency of Meteorology and Environment (PME) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be hosting the workshop at its premises in Jeddah. ESCWA will also be cooperating with the League of Arab States and UNEP/ROWA, being the main partners in Arab preparations for Rio+20, including this workshop.

5. Date and venue

The workshop will be held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the premises of the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment (PME) over three days, during 3-5 October 2011.

6. Language

Both Arabic and English will be used at the workshop. Simultaneous translation will be provided.

7. Contact information

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Annex

Arab preparatory meetings and workshops for Rio+20

Activity title	Venue and Date
Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment: Developing the Environmental Goods and Services Sector in the Arab Region for Transformation into a Green Economy	Beirut, 15 to 16 December 2010
3rd Roundtable Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Arab Region: Paving the Path to Green Economy in the Arab Region	Cairo, 26-27 January 2011
Meeting on Economic Policies Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Arab Region	Beirut, 20-21 July 2011
AIDMO-ESCWA Conference on the Role of Green Industries in Promoting Socio-economic Development in the Arab Region	Beirut, 28-30 September 2011
Meeting on Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region	Jeddah, 3-5 October 2011
Civil society consultation meeting on Rio+20	Beirut, 12-13 October 2011
Arab Regional Preparatory Conference for Rio+20	Cairo, 16-17 October 2011