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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting on Regional Cooperation for Climate
Change Impact Assessment on Water Resources
in the Arab Region
Beirut, 5-6 July 2012

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

In response to resolutions adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), and the ESCWA 25th Ministerial Session, as well as inter-agency collaborative processes involving the specialized and regional organizations of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, a Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability was launched. The Regional Initiative was formulated 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 achieving: (a) a baseline review; (b) impact assessment and vulnerability assessment; (c) awareness raising and information dissemination; and (d) capacity building and institutional strengthening.

The Regional Initiative was further articulated by Arab member states as well as United Nations and LAS organizations at a second 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). A third Expert Group Meeting, organized by the LAS, ESCWA and UNEP was held (Beirut, July 2011) to discuss the methodological framework for pursuing an integrated assessment within the Regional Initiative. The integrated assessment approach is 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.

The Regional Initiative is implemented through a collaborative partnership involving the LAS, ESCWA, UNEP, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO Cairo Office), United Nations University (UNU-INWEH), United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR Regional Office for the Arab States), Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In addition to the partner agencies, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) provide financial support for the initiative.

II. SCOPE

This Fourth Expert Group Meeting will discuss progress achieved in implementing the Regional Initiative. This includes the establishment of the Arab Domain, which sets the boundary conditions for regional climate modelling in the Arab region, and the sensitivity analysis undertaken to define the Arab

Domain; as well as the development of the ensemble of climate modelling efforts that will contribute to generating climate projections for the Arab region based on the agreed upon representative concentration pathways (RCPs).

The meeting will also adopt criteria for establishing the regional knowledge hub of the Regional Initiative and discuss methodological approaches for moving from climate change impact assessment to vulnerability assessment. This will be informed by a discussion of how water assessments are undertaken in country communications submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is expected that two working groups will be formed during the meeting to follow-up on work related to the regional knowledge hub and the vulnerability assessment methodology.

III. OBJECTIVES

The expert group meeting seeks to:

- (a) Review the progress achieved on the Regional Initiative.
- (b) Present the Arab Domain and discuss the climate models that will generate projections for the region.
- (c) Agree upon criteria for establishing the regional knowledge hub.
- (d) Discuss approaches for moving forward with the integrated assessment.
- (e) Establish working groups to follow-up on the establishment of the regional knowledge hub and vulnerability assessment methodologies.
- (f) Discuss the status of climate change networking in the region and how water assessments are undertaken by countries during the preparation of their national communications to the UNFCCC.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting is organized by the League of Arab States, ESCWA and UNEP/ROWA in coordination with regional and international partners engaged in 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 the fourth in a series of expert group meetings organized in support of the Regional Initiative.

V. PARTICIPANTS

Government representatives from ministries responsible for water resources in the Arab member states are invited to participate in the meeting. Regional climate centers, environmental ministries, 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.

Government representatives who are nominated by their ministries are kindly requested to send their letter of nomination and registration form to ESCWA by 10 June 2012 in order to assure arrangements for their sponsorship. 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 submit their registration form to ESCWA by 15 June 2012.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

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For additional information, please visit the meeting website at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/RICCAR>.