



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

ARAB REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING FOR THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – FOLLOW-UP ON RIO+20, 29-30 MAY 2013

Summary

The Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-20) was held in Dubai, on 29 and 30 May 2013. It brought together representatives of Arab countries, regional and international organizations, major groups and technical experts in the economic, social and environmental fields.

The meeting offered a platform for dialogue and consensus building on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) outcomes. It served to identify and discuss priorities for the implementation of the outcomes of Rio+20 in the Arab region, and provide collective input into CSD-20 and key international processes such as the development of sustainable development goals (SDGs), as well as into forums such as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Discussions focused particularly on the implications of Rio+20 and its outcomes for the region, as well as on SDGs, the green economy, HLPF and regional and national institutions for sustainable development. The meeting also tackled regional and national sustainable development initiatives.

Participants adopted a set of recommendations, formulated in the Dubai Document for the Arab Regional Implementation of Rio+20, which will be presented to the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment. The document will also be distributed by the League of Arab States to the Permanent Representatives of Arab countries in New York, with a view to guiding Arab negotiators in meetings related to CSD-20, HLPF and the Open Working Group on SDGs.

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Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM) for the Twentieth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-20), on 29 and 30 May 2013, in Dubai, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the League of Arab States, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Water of the United Arab Emirates and the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment. A half-day meeting of major groups was also organized on 28 May 2013, prior to the official Arab RIM.
2. The Arab RIM was held to follow up on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which was convened in June 2012, as part of the mandate of ESCWA to lead regional implementation meetings for the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. The meeting engaged Arab country representatives from the economic, social and environmental spheres, as well as representatives from major groups, and regional and international organizations.
3. The objective of the Arab RIM was to provide a platform for the following actions:
 - (a) Deliberating on the main outcomes of Rio+20 and their implications for the sustainable development agenda in the Arab region;
 - (b) Identifying and discussing priorities for the implementation of those outcomes, as per the priorities and needs of the Arab countries and the region;
 - (c) Preparing an outcome document to serve as the regional input into CSD-20, HLPF and other global processes relating to sustainable development.
4. This report will be submitted to CSD-20 (which includes Arab representatives from Lebanon and Saudi Arabia) as the contribution of the Arab region to the global follow-up to Rio+20. It will help to inform ongoing processes including the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) and the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), which includes Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates as members.
5. Apart from the opening and closing sessions, the meeting consisted of five technical or substantive sessions addressing key outcomes of Rio+20 and regional and national implementation priorities for sustainable development.
6. A set of recommendations, formulated in the Dubai Document for the Arab Regional Implementation of Rio+20, were adopted during the closing session. The document will be presented to the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE). It will also be distributed by the League of Arab States to the Permanent Representatives of Arab countries in New York, in order to guide Arab negotiators in meetings related to CSD-20, HLPF and the sustainable development goals.
7. A joint statement on the Arab RIM was also adopted by major groups, stakeholders and representatives of the civil society (annex II).

I. ADOPTION OF THE DUBAI DOCUMENT FOR THE ARAB REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF RIO+20

8. Discussions and negotiations during the Arab RIM led to the adoption of the Dubai Document for the Arab Regional Implementation of Rio+20, featured below.

We, the participants in the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-20) - Follow-up on the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) in Dubai on 29-30 May 2013, representatives of Arab countries, regional and international organizations, experts, and representatives of major groups of civil society and other stakeholders

(a) Ensure that we drive the work in the field of sustainable development in the Arab region at the national and regional levels, in order to achieve sustainable management of natural renewable and non-renewable resources in the region and in particular in the areas of energy, water, and food security, as well as elements of sustainable social and economic growth while providing a decent standard of living for our people, especially in the least developed countries;

(b) Believe that the human being is at the centre of development and that the eradication of poverty and achieving peace and security are the major challenges faced by the Arab region, and require accelerating the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in the context of regional and international cooperation;

(c) Retrace the directions and commitments mentioned in the Arab Ministerial Declaration on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio +20" especially the following items: (1) emphasize the political commitment to achieve sustainable development; (2) emphasize the Rio Principles and their importance for achieving sustainable development, especially common but differentiated responsibilities; (3) continue to implement the strategies, plans and programmes for sustainable development with the update of the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and to build on the progress made in its implementation; (4) stress the importance of effective partnerships with all groups and stakeholders in achieving sustainable development;

(d) Recalling the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations No. 66/288 issued on 27 July 2012, which adopted the document issued by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio +20", entitled "The future we want";

(e) Specifically recalling paragraphs (1) to (4) of the first chapter of "The future we want", "Our common vision", which includes the commitment to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions for the benefit of present and future generations and the planet, and that the elimination of poverty, changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, and the protection of natural resources needed for development are essential prerequisites for achieving sustainable development;

(f) Also recalling paragraphs (6) and (8) of "Our common vision" which state that people are at the centre of sustainable development, and a commitment to work with everyone in order to achieve overall steady economic growth, social development and environmental protection; and emphasize the importance of freedom, peace and security and respect for human rights, including the right to development and to a decent standard of living and the rule of law, gender equality and women's empowerment and commitment to the establishment of fair democratic societies in order to achieve development;

(g) And we reaffirm paragraph (16) of "The future we want" on all the principles of the Rio Declaration and in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and on work plans for the relevant international conferences, especially Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,

the Bali Strategic Plan to support technology and capacity-building, and the commitment to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on financing for development;

(h) Emphasizing what was stated in paragraphs (56), (57) and (58) of "The future we want," which underline that each country has its own approaches and visions and tools to achieve the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced way, which vary depending on their circumstances and national priorities, and that green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is one of the important tools for achieving sustainable development, and provides multiple options for policymakers and not a rigid set of rules. We stress that it should contribute to poverty eradication and employment creation and decent work for all, while maintaining ecosystems and benefitting from national and global initiatives in this area;

(i) Recalling specifically the resolution in paragraph (84) of "The future we want" on the establishment of a high-level political forum to replace the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and paragraph (85) on the identification of its responsibilities;

(j) In the framework of the resolutions set out in paragraphs (87), (88) and (89) from "The future we want" on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the principal body concerned with the environment which determines the Global Plan of Action in this field; and in paragraphs (78), (97) and (100) emphasizing the importance of the role of the regional commissions in ensuring a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development, and support for the efforts of national and regional institutions in this area;

(k) Recalling paragraphs (245) to (251) of "The future we want" on sustainable development goals, with the establishment of a transparent and inclusive intergovernmental process to develop goals that are coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, and that are action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate and limited in number, universally applicable to all countries, taking into account the national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities; and recognizing the membership of six (6) Arab countries in the open working group for the development of the sustainable development goals as a mechanism which allows consideration to be given to Arab states' visions and their national and regional priorities for sustainable development;

(l) And recalling the decisions of the Arab Economic and Social Summit in Riyadh on 21 to 22 January 2013 regarding the intensification of efforts to update the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and its action plan in light of the outcome from "Rio +20" and the eighteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and inviting Arab States to take the necessary measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects;

(m) Taking into account the progress achieved by the Arab States in the area of sustainable development and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in education, health and the environment, recognizing that the Arab region is changing and that these changes must be taken into account when formulating development programmes, especially since progress varies from country to country within the region and that there are many challenges that still lie ahead particularly in the eradication of poverty and job creation, achieving the aspirations of young people and the right to development, social cohesion and women's rights, the right of access to information and knowledge, and trade liberalization;

(n) Based on the deliberations and outcomes of the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting which was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in the period of 29-30 May 2013;

We, the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-20) - Follow-up on the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), declare the following:

- (i) Work to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development in the Arab region in a balanced manner and make every effort to achieve sustainable development in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, by seeking to strengthen institutional capacity-building at national and regional levels and through effective and transparent institutions, and with the participation of all segments of society at all levels. We realize that the restructuring of the institutional organization is consistent with the Rio principles, and Agenda 21 is not a goal in itself but a means to achieve sustainable development, taking into account the conditions and the privacy of countries.
- (ii) Emphasize that the Rio principles, especially common but differentiated responsibilities, are the basis of any agreements related to sustainable development, and emphasize the need to achieve the commitments contained in all the outcomes of international conferences related to sustainable development, the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 or the Istanbul Programme of Action, and the Political Declaration on Africa's Development Needs and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.
- (iii) Emphasize the concept of the right to development for all people and groups which should be in accordance with national priorities and lead to the provision of a decent and generous standard of living for all.
- (iv) Emphasize the importance of having a high-level political forum with a strong institutional structure under the General Assembly of the United Nations that has all the functions and powers that were vested in the Commission for Sustainable Development and perform all the functions identified by Rio+20 while providing it with all necessary resources, and shall continue to achieve sustainable development in all its aspects and at all levels, and to make decisions through negotiation and be global in nature.
- (v) Welcome the initiatives and national strategies in the field of green growth/green development in the Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates strategy for green development, and other similar strategies, and take advantage of green centres to gain access to green development and benefit from the experiences and success stories in the region.
- (vi) Call for the General Assembly to ensure a balanced representation of all parties in the membership of entities relevant to the work of the high-level political forum for sustainable development, and to ensure active participation in the work of the forum and make decisions which represent the interests of developing countries, including the Arab Group.
- (vii) Stress that the sustainable development goals which are being developed must take into account: the balance between the three pillars of sustainable development, the Rio principles, especially the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, with the provision of the means of implementation needed to achieve them, in particular, the provision of funding for developing countries and identifying effective mechanisms to provide opportunities for knowledge and technology transfer and diffusion and capacity-building. We stress that the goals be clear, measurable, and science-based and allow for the assessment of progress towards sustainable development, with a continued focus on completing the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals issued in the Millennium Declaration of 2000.

- (viii) Affirm that the sustainable development goals which will be agreed upon should take into account capacities, policies and national priorities of States, with due consideration given to international peace and security, poverty eradication, and the sectors of food, energy, water, transportation, the reduction of land degradation, drought and desertification, the maintenance of biodiversity, disaster reduction and emergency preparedness, and waste management which together represent the basic framework for achieving sustainable development, and to give special attention to the development of techniques and systems for water desalination and wastewater treatment, including sanitation and reuse, to bridge the gap between water availability and its use for the purpose of development.
- (ix) Request the developed countries to fulfil their obligations regarding the rights of developing countries stipulated in the outcomes of summits and conferences organized by the United Nations, including Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Monterrey Consensus, and the Bali Strategic Plan to support technology and capacity-building.
- (x) Respect the sovereignty of nations and people over their natural resources and emphasize the removal of obstacles or obligations limiting exports or production activities that achieve sustainable development, and the importance of removing trade barriers in developed countries in the context of the global trading system, so as to ease the flow of trade, goods and services to and from developing countries in implementation of the Doha Round negotiations.
- (xi) Urge the development of concepts related to the application of the green economy in line with the conditions, needs and national priorities for sustainable development in all countries, particularly with regard to the eradication of poverty and the adoption of appropriate policies in accordance with the social and economic development characteristics of each country, and the importance of providing funding and support for programmes in developing countries in this area.
- (xii) Emphasize the need to support and meet the challenges faced by poorer and least-developed countries with particular attention to countries in conflict or under occupation, and call for strengthening efforts to achieve peace and security in the Arab region, including an end to the occupation and the threat of aggression and interference in internal state affairs, and in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and on a fair basis to promote the path towards sustainable development and the protection of the environment and natural resources of people under occupation and aggression, in accordance with principle 23 of the Rio Principles.
- (xiii) Emphasize the importance of the role of the regional commissions and programmes of the United Nations, including the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Offices, in the active participation in the follow-up to the international processes launched by the Rio+20 conference and coordination between the countries of the region, and work to ensure a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development and provision of the necessary data and information to enrich the regional discussions around sustainable development, and assist in the development and implementation of programmes. We ask the Secretary-General to provide appropriate resources for the regional commissions to support this role.
- (xiv) Appreciate the effectiveness of the existing partnership between the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Arab League and the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office for West Asia, in the field of sustainable development, in order to identify common areas of development at the regional level, particularly in the area of capacity-building, the formulation of conventions, and the exchange

of information on successful experiences and lessons learned, and to support the related activities of the Arab ministerial councils and regional activities for international conferences of the United Nations.

- (xv) Emphasize the principles of Rio+20 on the importance of cooperation with civil society and stakeholders in the follow-up to the implementation of international commitments on various levels. In this context, we appreciate the cooperation between United Nations organizations, the League of Arab States and civil society organizations in the field of sustainable development.
- (xvi) Request the developed countries to fulfil their obligations in a timely manner to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustainable development by increasing the effectiveness of their official development assistance (ODA) including the debt swap for sustainable development, with a call to the international financial institutions to follow their role in supporting this work and to create effective partnerships and new initiatives to provide sources of funding for the programmes of developing countries in this area, particularly with regard to the support for scientific research aimed at developing national technologies, transfer and localization of appropriate technology, and capacity-building in line with the national priorities of States.
- (xvii) Urge the international community to establish a mechanism to facilitate the transfer and localization of clean, environmentally friendly technology to developing countries, including cleaner fossil fuel and energy efficiency techniques and equipment, and helping to raise the efficiency of the use of natural resources and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. We urge that this mechanism is concerned with all aspects related to the transfer of technology, in particular: (a) identifying the needs of developing countries and appropriate technologies; (b) identifying the necessary funding sources; (c) the effective transfer of technology; (d) the adaptation of technology and related capacity-building and maintaining property rights.
- (xviii) Call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to request the participation of regional groups to express their opinion in the preparation of the report related to intergenerational solidarity in achieving sustainable development.

In addition to the above, we recommend to the responsible authorities in the Arab countries the following:

- a. Work to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region in accordance with the region's circumstances and priorities through updating the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and its operational plans in accordance with the priorities of the region; and work to implement Arab strategies and approved plans to meet the future challenges of sustainable development, including the Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region, the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 10-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the green belts project in the territories of the Arab world, regional biodiversity planning, the Muscat Action Plan for Wetlands in the Arab Countries, and the Arab Framework of Action on Climate Change.
- b. Undertake an assessment and prepare a report on the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Initiative for the Arab Region.

- c. Emphasize that sustainable development programmes in the Arab region target the diversification of the economies of the Arab states and options to ensure poverty reduction and job creation, social justice, and environmental safety, including strengthening the capacity of sustainable productive sectors, especially in rural areas and small and medium enterprises, including encouraging youth groups in Arab societies.
- d. Diversify energy sources, including new and renewable energy, to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region. To ensure this, developed countries and international organizations should provide support in the areas of scientific research, transfer and diffusion of technology, and capacity-building in relevant areas.
- e. Give priority to programmes that target poor and marginalized groups and work to provide more basic services and infrastructure, including water supply and sanitation, health and education, taking into account the equitable distribution of resources and services, especially in light of unprecedented population growth in recent times, with due consideration given to the needs of the major groups of farmers, academics, women, children and young people, amongst others.
- f. Introduce the concepts of sustainable development in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities to raise the awareness of younger generations of the importance of achieving sustainable development, particularly the conservation and sustainability of natural resources.
- g. Support the existing trend in the Arab world for the development and establishment of information networks and data to support sustainable development decision-making processes and support and take advantage of Arab initiatives in this area that benefit decision-making, including the Abu Dhabi Environmental Data Initiative "Eye on Earth".
- h. Request that ESCWA prepare a periodic follow-up report on the implementation of the outcomes of Rio+20 in Arab countries for submission to the League of Arab States for adoption.
- i. Assign the League of Arab States to send this document to its Permanent Representatives of the Arab countries in New York and direct it to the Arab negotiators to guide them in meetings related to preparations for the Twentieth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and the consultative meetings to prepare the sustainable development goals.
- j. Present this document at the next meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment.

We, the participants in the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-20) - Follow-up on the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) in Dubai on 29-30 May 2013, representatives of Arab States and international and regional organizations, experts and representatives from major groups, would like to thank His Excellency the Minister of Environment and Water, Dr. Rashid Ahmad bin Fahad and appreciate his sponsorship of the meeting and his honouring of the opening session. We also extend our thanks to both the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment in the United Arab Emirates and the Dubai Police Academy, and the League of Arab States, and the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office of West Asia, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, for their sincere efforts in setting technical and logistical support for the implementation of the meeting and the generous hospitality to the participants.

Dubai, 30 May 2013

II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

9. The official meeting was preceded by a half-day meeting of major groups on the afternoon of 28 May 2013. The joint statement of major groups is reproduced in Annex II.

A. OPENING SESSION

10. The opening session of the meeting included statements from high-level representatives of organizing partners and the host country.

11. Mr. Rashid Ahmed Bin Fahad, Minister of Environment and Water, United Arab Emirates, welcomed the participants and stated that one of the key aims of the meeting was to operationalize the commitments made at Rio+20 by Arab countries. The statement also outlined the pioneering role that the United Arab Emirates has played in the region in green growth and renewable energy.

12. Mr. Djamel Eddine Djaballah, Director of Environment, Housing, Water Resources and Sustainable Development at the League of Arab States, outlined the Sustainable Development Initiative for the Arab Region (SDIAR) adopted by CAMRE, which provides the framework for sustainable development in the region. He noted that SDIAR was being updated to address the Rio+20 outcomes, as well as emerging issues and regional priorities.

13. Mr. Iyad Abumoghli, Director and Regional Representative, UNEP, presented sustainable development as both a responsibility and an opportunity for the region, and highlighted the importance of having an Arab regional perspective in international negotiations and processes relating to sustainable development, including the process of developing SDGs.

14. Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, ESCWA, discussed the importance of reviewing regional institutions for sustainable development in the Arab region, highlighting the role of scientific cooperation, research and technology, and underscoring key priorities for the region in terms of water, food and energy security.

15. Finally, Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Bin Fahad, Chairman of the Higher Committee of the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment and Director of the Dubai Police Academy, welcomed the opportunity that the meeting presented to develop a roadmap for the Arab region and stressed the importance of local and national efforts to address regional priority challenges in terms of food, energy and water security.

B. SESSION 1: OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN OUTCOMES OF RIO+20 AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARAB REGION

16. The session provided an overview of the meeting objectives and desired outcomes, and explored the main outcomes of Rio+20 and their implications for the Arab region. It also provided the context for subsequent sessions which focused specifically on SDGs, green economy, the institutional framework for sustainable development, and regional/national implementation. The session comprised two expert presentations, a keynote video address from Ms. Amina Mohammed, Secretary-General's Special Advisor on the post-2015 development agenda, and a panel and open floor discussion. The session was moderated by Mr. Saad al-Numairy, advisor to the Minister of Environment and Water, United Arab Emirates.

17. Ms. Roula Majdalani, ESCWA, presented an overview of the meeting agenda, objectives and desired outcomes and posed a series of key questions to guide the meeting discussions. She highlighted the global, regional and national interlinkages for sustainable development and the importance of developing a regional roadmap for the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes that addressed regional priorities and national challenges. She also underscored the need to update SDIAR to include tangible activities relating to

capacity-building, technology, finance and institutional reform, and highlighted the importance of experience sharing between Arab countries and of building on and scaling up national success stories in the Arab region. She also underlined the interlinked environmental, social and economic challenges faced by the region, as well as the new tools provided by Rio+20 to assist Governments in addressing these challenges in an integrated way, including SDGs, green economy and enhanced institutions.

18. The video message from Ms. Amina Mohammed provided insights into the processes underway in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, highlighting the need to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through an inclusive process with sustainable development as the ultimate goal. The global agenda should be universal, transformative, people-centred and planet-sensitive. Key challenges in this regard included the rapid rise in energy consumption due to subsidies, the increasing consumption of water and decreasing supply, and lifestyle changes leading to overconsumption. National and regional consultations in the region undertaken in the context of the post-2015 agenda highlighted regional priorities including good governance, social justice and human dignity. She closed with a request that the Arab region make its voice heard loud and clear in global discussions.

19. Ms. Anhar Hegazi, ESCWA consultant, presented an overview of the Rio+20 outcomes and implications for the Arab region, highlighting that any regional roadmap for sustainable development should address regional priorities including energy, water and food security; youth unemployment; peace and security; sustainable urban development; and sustainable consumption and production. She outlined that Arab regional priorities agreed in the Arab Declaration at Rio+20 were generally taken into consideration in the Rio+20 outcome document. She also underlined that green economy should be a mechanism for sustainable development, not a barrier, and that Arab countries should consider creating effective legislative and other enabling environments to accelerate progress towards sustainable development and green economy. The importance of financing mechanisms and technology transfer were also highlighted.

20. Four panellists further informed discussions. Mr. Abusafieh, Minister of Environment, Palestine, touched upon some key components of sustainable development, such as the role of education and awareness. He stressed the importance of broadening the scope of sustainable development from environmental management to encompass its three pillars, thus tackling environmental, social and economic sustainability, and the need to address unsustainable consumption and rejuvenate the Arab Environment Facility. Mr. Rashid al-Kuwari, Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Qatar, outlined key regional conventions relating to sustainable development and emphasized the importance of enhancing the engagement of the Arab region in all international forums, with a united Arab regional roadmap and position. Mr. Djamel Djaballah, League of Arab States, outlined regional specificities relating to war, conflict, terrorism and exploitation of financial and natural resources, and underscored the need to develop a long-term sustainable development roadmap for the region, in line with regional capacities and building upon progress made over the past ten years. He also stressed the importance of the intraregional transfer of knowledge and innovation. Mr. Jihad Azour, Former Finance Minister, Lebanon, indicated that Arab countries still view sustainable development as a challenge rather than an opportunity for progressing a regional agenda. He underscored the need for growth and employment generation in the region, and the fact that countries should undertake scoping studies on investment opportunities in key sectors to achieve a green economy and present results to Arab investors. He also highlighted the need to reconsider financing mechanisms for sustainable development.

21. The moderated discussion that ensued consisted of interventions from Arab Governments (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen), as well as major groups working in the field of science and technology, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

22. Several countries underlined the need for the international commitments made by developed countries to be realized, including those relating to technology, finance and trade and debt relief. Others highlighted the need for a clear vision and roadmap for sustainable development in the region that moves away from the old approach of viewing developing countries as recipients of knowledge and resources, to one that builds

human capacity and development as a basis for innovation, opening markets and attracting investment. The importance of having a joint Arab position on key international processes was stressed, including on HLPF, SDGs and financing for sustainable development. Regional priorities and challenges, such as peace and security, foreign occupation, food security, water scarcity, energy security, employment generation, desertification, climate change, and the refugee situation, were all highlighted. The importance of building capacity for integrated decision-making was underscored, including updating statistical data and systems and the effective measurement of sustainable development objectives. The emerging importance of green economy as a tool for sustainable development was also highlighted, however concerns were expressed with regard to its definition and how it can best be applied. Other mechanisms for sustainable development in the region that were evoked included the need to update SDIAR and strengthen the institutional framework so that it addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development in a coordinated and cohesive manner. The importance of broad participation from relevant stakeholders was also highlighted.

23. Representatives of major groups underscored the need for a paradigm shift to embrace green economy as a tool for sustainable development and the importance of policies that encourage scientific research and education reform to embrace sustainable development. They also stressed the need to address inequalities at different levels, ensure accountability and enable the engagement of civil society in policymaking and in developing a roadmap for the region.

C. SESSION 2: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE POST-2015 AGENDA

24. The session discussed SDGs and the post-2015 agenda to identify key Arab regional messages to be communicated in relevant international forums and processes, as well as key regional priorities for implementing SDGs at the regional and national levels. The session comprised two expert presentations, a panel discussion and a plenary discussion, and was moderated by Mr. Sameer Ghazi, President Deputy for Environment and Sustainable Development, Saudi Arabia.

25. Ms. Michelle Obeid, University of Manchester, presented the key findings of a background paper entitled “Key Issues for Consideration on the Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015 Agenda”, highlighting the uneven progress on MDGs and the need for SDGs to build on acquired experience. She examined key conceptual challenges related to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into a cohesive agenda to reach a coherent, universal platform for post-2015. The need for broad stakeholder engagement was also mentioned, and a number of regional priorities for SDGs were underlined, including peace and security; climate change; energy, food and water security; decent jobs; migration; urbanisation; and gender equality.

26. Mr. Waleed Zubari, Arabian Gulf University, highlighted some of the shortcomings of MDGs, which were formulated by donors, did not acknowledge the realities faced by countries and addressed quantity instead of quality. He highlighted that the food, energy and water nexus should be a priority for the formulation of SDGs, along with the due consideration of quality and adequate indicators. He stressed the importance of understanding the interlinkages and trade-offs between policy objectives, and the need for comprehensive plans for water and energy security.

27. Two expert panellists subsequently contributed to the discussions. Mr. Ghassan al-Sayah, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment, Lebanon, highlighted several obstacles to sustainable development, including the need for political and economic stability, poverty eradication, access to clean water, and the ongoing conflict in Syria and the severe strain that the escalating numbers of refugees are placing on development. Mr. Kishan Khoday, Practice Leader for Energy and Environment in the Arab States, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted the need to ensure equitable access to energy, water and food, and to support vulnerable communities where climate change is compounding existing problems. He also stressed the importance of effective governance for sustainable development in the region, the rising importance of green economy and south-south cooperation in the post-MDG framework, and the need to consider the role of Arab investments in Asia and Africa and their effects on food and energy security.

28. A moderated plenary discussion ensued with interventions from Arab countries, major groups and regional organizations. In their interventions, Arab countries highlighted a range of regional priority issues to be addressed by SDGs, including peace and security; poverty eradication; freedom from conflict and violence; implementation of a green economy roadmap; health services; migration; foreign occupation; good governance; access to water and the energy-food-water nexus; climate change; desertification; disaster risk reduction; and biodiversity preservation. Other issues raised in the context of SDGs included the importance of the Rio Principles, especially the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; the need for ODA for developing countries; the acknowledgement that different countries have different national priorities and circumstances; the fact that SDGs should take into consideration the differences between developed and developing countries, and the needs of future generations. Finally, the importance of inclusive consultations on the post-2015 agenda at the country level was stressed.

29. Regional United Nations and League of Arab States entities highlighted the important role of regional institutions such as CAMRE and the League of Arab States for coordinating a unified position on SDGs, as well as the importance of embracing the three dimensions of sustainable development.

30. Representatives of major groups highlighted the need for inclusive consultations on SDGs that would engage major groups, the importance of science-based goals and evidence-based decision-making, as well as the importance of education, health care and of the prevention of violence against vulnerable groups.

31. Some key messages drawn from the discussions included the following: Arab countries should contribute to the development of SDGs taking into account the specific challenges of their region such as demographic changes, lack of stability and governance, economic and food crises, and the exploitation of natural resources. The importance of a universal agenda for both developed and developing countries was also acknowledged, and the fact that goals should be limited in number and address all three dimensions of sustainable development.

D. SESSION 3: A GREEN ECONOMY ROADMAP FOR THE ARAB REGION

32. The session discussed opportunities and priorities for the transition towards a green economy in the Arab region and the analysis undertaken to date. It also identified how the Arab region might operationalize the transition towards a green economy at the regional and national levels. The session comprised two expert presentations, a panel discussion and a plenary discussion, and was moderated by Mr. Iyad Abumoghli, UNEP.

33. Introducing the session, the moderator pointed to the need to look at all sectors, not only energy, and called for the establishment of a knowledge-sharing institution or platform for green economy in the region. He also mentioned the work carried out by UNEP with partners at the global level, through its Partnership for Action on Green Economy.

34. In her presentation, Ms. Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Productive Sectors Section, ESCWA, underlined the fact that, even though green economy was considered at Rio+20 as an important tool for sustainable development, but there was no one-size-fits-all pattern. Some countries in the Arab region now have national initiatives on green economy or green growth, and the region should build on and scale up these initiatives. ESCWA has undertaken preliminary work on mapping green economy policies, institutions, programmes, and preliminary indicators to monitor progress in the Arab region. It also aims to develop policy guidelines for decision-makers, and is conducting a pilot project to set up green helpdesks in Oman, Lebanon and soon in Jordan. Further regional cooperation is needed to move towards green economy in the region.

35. Mr. Mohammed Abd rabo, University of Alexandria, presented the preliminary results of an ongoing green economy study for the Arab region, which is investigating policy options for driving investment in the green economy across the key sectors of water, food and energy. The study, conducted in response to a

request by CAMRE, is being coordinated by ESCWA and UNEP. The study will focus on the four key subregions, namely Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Least Developed Countries, Maghreb and Mashreq, and use a multi-criteria analysis to identify potential policy priorities for different groups.

36. Two expert panellists then provided their insights into the discussion. Mr. Hussein Abaza, Advisor to the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Egypt, outlined a main message, stating that foreign support will come to the region only when it will have developed a long-term vision of its own growth. The debate should not focus on the nature of green economy, but rather on the means of its implementation in the region. He presented the rationale for approaching the problem from an economic perspective, as traditional environmental approaches have not worked well. He emphasized the need for coherent policies at all levels in order to address trade-offs, and the role of civil society participation, and of education and environmental awareness. He also mentioned the need for the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization to change their methods with developing countries and addressing the issue of conditionalities and the trade distortions caused by developed countries. He finally suggested the establishment of a centre of excellence on green economy in the region, focused on the exchange of good practices.

37. Mr. Khaled Irani, Former Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, Jordan, made a case for the adoption of green economy based on the Jordanian example. He emphasized that Governments should engage the private sector in activities such as waste management, and pointed to the need for adequate regulation in renewable energy sectors, and to the fact that subsidies can be too high. He explained how Jordan has introduced ecotourism, which has generated income streams for local communities in remote areas.

38. The open plenary discussion reflected different viewpoints on green economy and the way forward. Some countries such as Jordan, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates have well-advanced plans or roadmaps. Jordan has identified the following six target areas for achieving green economy, in which 51,000 potential new job opportunities could be created: energy access, renewable energy, waste, agriculture, sustainable tourism and freshwater management. Morocco's priorities for green growth include increasing the production of renewable energy; recycling plastic materials; implementing renewable energy plans; managing renewable water resources; restructuring the agricultural system; and reforming environmental taxes. The United Arab Emirates roadmap, finalised in September 2013, focused on the reduction of gas flaring and carbon emissions, and the efficiency of water use.

39. Other countries expressed concern over the fact that green economy was not yet clearly defined and stressed that countries should focus on their own priorities. Kuwait called for a regional meeting to discuss the definition of green economy in the regional context, while Saudi Arabia questioned the methodology of the green economy study coordinated by ESCWA and UNEP, in particular whether it addressed important aspects such as trade and information on costs for the region. Some countries highlighted that the green economy approach was intrinsically environmental in nature and was unlikely to produce job opportunities and address regional development challenges, well-being and equality.

40. Major groups underscored the relevance of green economy as a tool for the region provided that it was adapted to reflect regional and national priorities, highlighting the importance of new indicators for measuring progress that go beyond the gross domestic product. The importance of empowering small farmers and women was also highlighted, including the introduction of enabling legislation and incentives to help different social groups shift to the green economy.

E. SESSION 4: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INTERLINKAGES

41. The session provided an overview of the emerging global institutional framework for sustainable development and the global, regional and national interlinkages. It explored opportunities for enabling Arab

regional and national institutions to better engage with international processes and for facilitating the implementation of sustainable development. Participants stressed the need for integrated decision-making at the regional and national levels. The session comprised three expert presentations, a panel discussion and a plenary discussion, and was moderated by Ms. Zahwa Kuwari, Director, Environmental Assessment and Planning Directorate, Bahrain.

42. Ms. Irena Zubcevic and Mr. David Le Blanc, Division for Sustainable Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, provided an overview of the emerging international framework for sustainable development including HLPF, SDGs, financing for sustainable development and the technology mechanism processes, and highlighted the issue of linking these processes together. They outlined some of the lessons learned from CSD-20 at the global, regional and national levels, including the need for an effective regional platform and the enhancement of regional engagement, as well as the importance of interregional dialogue. HLPF could provide a better platform for sharing national experiences through voluntary peer review, presentations, a database for sharing practices and lessons learned, and capacity-building for preparations at the national level. Sustainable development should be strengthened as the overarching framework for the work of the United Nations Regional Commissions, including fostering the mainstreaming of sustainable development at the national level and engaging all relevant state and non-state actors. HLPF should engage Regional Commissions more systematically in HLPF sessions and support interregional dialogues.

43. Ms. Melanie Hutchinson, Programme Officer, UNEP, provided an overview of the processes stemming from Rio+20 relating to environmental governance, including the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP. She outlined the importance of strengthening the science-policy interface, the regional presence of UNEP and capacity-building. She noted that the First Universal Session of the UNEP Governing Council was held in February 2013. She also highlighted UNEP's progress in establishing the International Advisory Council for the Advancement of Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability. She outlined that environmental sustainability will have to be addressed in a balanced way in SDGs. She concluded that democracy, good governance and the rule of law are essential for sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

44. Mr. Riccardo Mesiano, First Economic Affairs Officer, ESCWA, presented the findings of a background paper on institutions for sustainable development. He highlighted the global, regional and national interlinkages within the new framework of HLPF, and stressed that the Arab region needed to stay engaged with the international processes stemming from Rio+20, including HLPF, SDGs and the financing strategy. Some key issues for Governments to consider included how regional institutions could best support the Rio+20 follow-up, how institutional arrangements could enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, and how green economy could best be applied in the region. A key gap has been largely relying on environmental institutions, which has impeded a fully integrated approach to decision-making. CAMRE and SDIAR have provided important mechanisms at the regional level and significant progress has been made on environmental management and sustainable development; however countries should consider reviewing regional institutional arrangements so that sustainable development is addressed at the highest political level and mechanisms are in place for cross-sectoral coordination, at both the regional and national levels. In the context of HLPF, ESCWA, the League of Arab States and UNEP should continue to organize regional meetings and enhance the engagement of the Arab region in global processes. The integration of green economy policies into national strategies and the potential for a regional green economy roadmap were also highlighted, as was the need for a participatory approach to policy development.

45. Two expert panellists then provided their insights on institutions for sustainable development. Ms. Mona Makram-Ebeid, Senator, Egypt, referred to SDGs and the fact that they must inspire regional and local Governments, civil society and individuals to change their behaviour. She highlighted the key role of parliaments in achieving sustainable development commitments and proposed a new perspective on sustainable development in which the economy is at the service of social and environmental objectives.

Mr. Mehdi Jafaar, Oman Environment Society, Oman, outlined the importance of reforming institutions in the context of Rio+20 as a means to an end, and that institutions in the Arab region should be built upon good governance and transparency. He highlighted that a key gap for the region was the absence of effective engagement with NGOs and the civil society, and that the region was going in the opposite direction to the rest of the world in this regard. He also advocated a long-term vision for green economy in the region in accordance with national circumstances, and underscored the fact that national strategies for sustainable development have suffered in the past from poor implementation as they were not effectively integrated into the institutional framework.

46. A moderated plenary discussion followed with interventions from Arab countries, major groups and regional organizations. Countries had differing views on the need for institutional reform. Saudi Arabia highlighted the success of regional institutions such as CAMRE, the effective development of sustainable development indicators and the fact that the region was leading the world in national institutions for sustainable development. Several countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia and Yemen highlighted the key institutional gap as being the allocation of sustainable development to the environment pillar and the lack of effective institutional mechanisms for integration of the three dimensions. Jordan highlighted the fact that the institutional framework had to be reformed to address new and emerging issues including food, energy and financial crises. Iraq and Tunisia recognized the important role of CAMRE, but advocated for the establishment of a sustainable development council or a regional HLPF for sustainable development that can effectively integrate social, economic and environmental issues. The panellists, ESCWA and UNEP supported the proposal for a regional HLPF involving all key ministries to capitalize on regional success stories in all key sectors.

47. Major groups made a number of key points: the need to capitalize on lessons learned from CSD-20 at the international level with a mandate for SDGs; the need to establish a mechanism in the League of Arab States which would include all sectoral ministries, not just environment, with a clear executive policy and follow-up mechanisms including evaluation, monitoring, financing and skills development; and the importance of enhancing the role of NGOs in a partnership with Governments.

F. SESSION 5: ARAB REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

48. The session discussed the region's experience with SDIAR, including its successes, shortcomings and gaps, and the best way forward for updating SDIAR so that it provides an enhanced mechanism for accelerating the implementation of sustainable development in the region. It also showcased some leading national case studies on the implementation of sustainable development in the post-Rio+20 context and discussed how these might be scaled up in the region. The session included four expert presentations, and a panel and plenary discussion moderated by Mr. Mostafa Madbouly, Director, Regional Office for Arab States, UN HABITAT.

49. The moderator opened the session by highlighting the need to develop means of implementation for SDIAR and a mechanism for coordinating ministries within the Arab region.

50. Mr. Ibrahim Abdel Gelil, Arabian Gulf University, presented a background paper proposing a framework for updating SDIAR. He highlighted the need to review existing strategies, progress and gaps rather than developing new strategies. Key priorities proposed for inclusion in SDIAR included peace and security, the water-energy-food nexus, climate change and green economy. He outlined a range of existing strategies for issues such as water and climate change, and the need to focus on identifying gaps and implementation. To operationalize SDIAR, an action plan is needed and requires Governments to answer key questions including who, what, when and at what cost. He outlined the need for subregional plans, Arab-Arab cooperation and an Arab environment facility that would address means of implementation.

51. Ms. Monia Braham, Director of Economic-Environmental Analysis and Planning, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Tunisia, presented Tunisia's national roadmap for the follow-up

to Rio+20, which focuses on green growth based on principles of national sovereignty and global integration. Tunisia is working with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to adopt the green economy concept and with the International Labour Organization on a national strategy for green jobs.

52. Ms. Capricia Chabarekh, Environmental Specialist, ECODIT Liban, Lebanon, outlined Lebanon's national report to Rio+20 and provided an overview of the country's efforts towards a national strategy for sustainable development. She also highlighted some of the challenges faced by Lebanon, including environmental damage caused by Israel and the growing number of refugees.

53. Two expert panellists then provided their insights on regional and national initiatives for sustainable development. Mr. Mohammed Maktit, Head of Planning and Forecasting Division, Ministry of Energy, Mining, Water and Environment, Morocco underscored the need for a participatory approach to sustainable development at the national level that addresses social, economic and environmental aspects in a balanced way. Ms. Nuha Ma'aytah, President, General Federation of Jordanian Women, highlighted the importance of a regional forum and regional initiative for sustainable development with short, medium and long-term horizons, specific timetables, indicators, improved governance and accountability. She also underscored the need for the participation of civil society and empowerment of women to achieve sustainable development.

54. The moderator highlighted some key questions for updating SDIAR, including the consideration of subregional differences, the role of national Governments and regional institutions, the provision of financial resources, indicators and monitoring of SDIAR, and clear timeframes. He also underscored the critical issue of urban livelihoods which should be addressed in an updated SDIAR, given that future development in the Arab region will focus on the expansion of cities. The region should set regional mid-term targets for renewable energy water, and transport that are monitored with measurable indicators.

55. Jordan indicated that while the region had comprehensive strategies in place, the key gap was implementation. Similarly, many countries have national strategies in place but fail to implement them. The region has a responsibility to stimulate and secure investment and, to do so, must address peace and security issues. There have been major changes since 2002 when SDIAR was developed, including with regard to investment and foreign direct investment, and the updated SDIAR will need to take stock of this new reality.

56. The Arab Organization for Agricultural Development highlighted three points: (a) the SDIAR update should include the participation of Arab organizations; (b) a meeting should be organized to ensure consistency and synergies with existing strategies; (c) Arab funds should open windows for funding sustainable development in the region.

57. The major groups supported the need to update SDIAR and the approach proposed by Mr. Ibrahim Abdel Gelil with the inclusion of urban development. The Arab Network for Environment and Development outlined the comprehensive approach taken in Egypt through a sustainable development forum comprising 14 working groups, focusing on all key topics of sustainable development, and that this could be used as a model to upscale to the regional level with a regional think tank including all relevant stakeholders.

58. A final presentation by Ms. Fatma Sahib Al Habashi, Ministry of Environment and Water, United Arab Emirates, provided an overview of the country's national plan for green growth, developed through a collaborative effort between the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Environment and Water, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Global Green Growth Institute. The plan comprises four components: policy and governance; data management; capacity-building; and pilot projects. The strategy also targets six priority sectors: oil and gas; water and electricity; transport; construction; waste management; and land use. Stakeholders with expertise within their sectors will work together to identify policies and initiatives under the guidance of the plan's team, and sectoral strategies will be integrated and synergized to form a national strategic framework for policymaking. The strategy will include rigorous economic and policy analysis to develop priority actions, and will contain policy recommendations, an implementation roadmap, KPIs to measure progress, and roles and responsibilities.

G. CLOSING SESSION: DISCUSSION OF THE RIM OUTCOME DOCUMENT

59. The closing session of the Arab RIM focused on a discussion of a short outcome document which was circulated to participants in draft format prior to the session. The session was chaired by Mr. Fadhil Abbas Ahmed, Iraq (Chair of the CAMRE session in 2013), along with representatives from the organizing partners the League of Arab States, ESCWA and UNEP, as well as the host country, the United Arab Emirates. The draft outcome document was presented as a non-binding document which will provide recommendations and guidance for Arab negotiators in New York with regard to key sustainable development processes.
60. An open plenary discussion followed with amendments proposed to the outcome document by country delegates. The title of the document was amended at the request of several countries from the 'Dubai Declaration' to the 'Dubai Document'. Countries briefly discussed the preamble paragraphs before agreeing to move onto the substantive paragraphs.
61. On the HLPF for sustainable development, country delegates discussed the importance of ensuring that the forum is established with a strong institutional structure and in accordance with all of the functions and powers that were agreed upon at Rio+20. Concerns were expressed that current negotiations taking place in New York were aiming to weaken this institutional structure and therefore a firm position by the Arab region was needed on establishing a strong HLPF.
62. With regard to SDGs, delegates agreed to elevate the issue of peace and security as a priority for the region, along with food, energy, water, transportation, land degradation, desertification and other issues. The importance of water desalination and wastewater treatment was also highlighted. On green economy, delegates supported the development of concepts for applying green economy in accordance with national circumstances.
63. Country delegates also supported the effective partnership between ESCWA, UNEP and the League of Arab States with regard to sustainable development and coordinating post-Rio+20 follow-up activities. Delegates supported the update of SDIAR and requested that a progress report be prepared. They also asked that ESCWA prepare a periodic follow-up report on the implementation of the outcomes of Rio+20 in Arab countries.
64. Regional organizations and major groups also provided comments. Major groups drew attention to their joint position statement and their key recommendations relating to SDGs, Arab regional and national initiatives for sustainable development and engagement of major groups in sustainable development policymaking.
65. At the close of the session, it was agreed that the Dubai Document would be circulated for final comments, then finalized and submitted to the League of Arab States, to be send to the Permanent Representatives of Arab countries in New York to guide them in meetings and preparations for CSD-20, HLPF and consultative meetings on SDGs. It was also agreed that the document would be submitted to CAMRE.
66. The chairs closed the meeting by expressing gratitude to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for hosting the meeting and the organizing partners and all participants for their contributions.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE

67. The meeting was held at the Dubai Police Academy in Dubai, on 29 and 30 May 2013. It was preceded by a half-day meeting of major groups on 28 May 2013.

B. AGENDA

68. The meeting comprised the following sessions:

Opening session: Welcome and opening statements.

Session 1: Overview of the main outcomes of Rio+20 and implications for the Arab region.

Session 2: Sustainable development goals and the post-2015 agenda.

Session 3: A green economy roadmap for the Arab region.

Session 4: Institutional framework for sustainable development: global, regional and national interlinkages.

Session 5: Arab regional and national initiatives for sustainable development.

Closing session: Discussion of the RIM outcome document and report.

C. PARTICIPANTS

69. The meeting was attended by a total of 149 participants, including representatives of the organizing partners and host country (Annex I). A total of 77 participants represented 18 Arab Governments, while major groups and civil society were represented by 15 participants. Government representation covered a variety of ministries, including foreign affairs, environment, social affairs, planning, finance, economy, energy, trade and agriculture.

D. EVALUATION

70. An evaluation questionnaire was distributed in order to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the meeting. A total of 49 participants responded to the questionnaire, out of which 89 per cent rated the overall quality of the meeting as good to excellent quality. A total of 92 per cent of respondents rated the quality of the meeting documentation as good to excellent, while a total of 78 per cent rated the quality of the presentations as good to excellent. All of the respondents (100 per cent) thought that the meeting provided a good to excellent opportunity for networking and experience sharing among experts. A total of 77 per cent of respondents rated the clarity of the meeting objectives as good to excellent, while 70 per cent thought that the meeting was good to excellent at achieving its objectives. When asked about the need for follow-up to the results of the meeting, almost all respondents (98 per cent) asserted such a need.

71. With regard to written comments, a general comment that was made by several participants was the need for additional time to discuss key topics in more detail. In addition, a number of participants highlighted the need for more opportunities for sharing country experiences and achievements on specific sustainable development topics. In this regard, the role of ESCWA in providing opportunities for experience exchange between Arab countries was highlighted. Another comment was the need to broaden the focus of the discussions and participants from the environment with a greater emphasis on the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.

72. Almost all participants asserted their support for follow-up activities, with numerous suggestions primarily focusing on enhancing communication, networking, experience sharing and consultation. Key proposals included:

(a) Creating a network of sustainable development focal points chosen among the meeting participants, which would advise on the follow-up to the meeting;

(b) Requesting that ESCWA prepare a regular bulletin to be dispatched to Arab experts and stakeholders, updating them on progress made and ongoing negotiations on issues related to the Rio+20 outcomes, particularly SDGs, HLPF and the financing strategy;

(c) Sharing the Arab RIM outcomes formally with relevant stakeholders of the international community;

(d) Organizing a follow-up meeting to support continued country consultations on suitable financing mechanisms for sustainable development and SDGs;

(e) Organizing small working groups and roundtables to discuss key topics in depth, including a dedicated meeting to develop the Sustainable Development Initiative for the Arab region and to share country experiences and success stories;

(f) Requesting that ESCWA develop, in collaboration with concerned parties, a specific methodology for indicators to measure progress in green economy.

E. DOCUMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

73. All the presentations and Arab RIM documentation are available online from <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=2044E>.

Annex I*

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Annex II

JOINT STATEMENT BY MAJOR GROUPS ON THE ARAB RIM*

Position statement of the Major Groups, Stakeholders and Civil Society¹

Arab Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM)
Dubai May 29-30, 2013

General Overview

The Major Groups and Stakeholders and Civil Society (MG&S) attending the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM) for the Twentieth Session of the United Nations, Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-20) – Follow-up on Rio+20, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 29-30 May 2013, welcome the invitation and the opportunity to participate in such an important multi-stakeholder event with the representatives of the Arab Governments, United Nations agencies and experts, especially that the region is witnessing tremendous and challenging changes.

This is in line with the final declaration of Rio+20 reiterating the full engagement of the different stakeholders in the implementation process as prerequisite for its success.

However, the MG&S and CS attending the Arab RIM look forward for a more active participation in the whole process of the implementation of the Rio+20 declaration. Such partnership brings in various perspectives of the different stakeholders and echoes grassroots realities. As such, it is imperative for the success of the implementations of “The Future We Want”.

The MG&S and CS are confident that the future we want in the region is best communicated by the citizens of the region. We trust that preparation and engagement in the RIM and beyond to be more participatory, open, independent and inclusive to reflects people’s aspirations, perspectives and ensure their voices are well reflected and communicated to the governments representatives.

Overview on the implications of the major outcomes from Rio+20 for the Arab region

RIM MGS&S participants stress that the Sustainable Development Goals should:

1. Be strongly linked to Agenda 21 (1992), Millennium Declaration (2000) and Johannesburg plan of action (2002), hence be holistic addressing the dimensions of SD, including its political enablers (addressing the participatory governance, rights based approach to development, financial transformative structures, etc).
2. Complement and build on the lessons learned from MDGs, particularly the lack of sectoral coordination and the weak international partnership for development.
3. Be universal in application while allowing for regional and national realities, priorities and capabilities.
4. Build capacities in Arab countries, increase the transfer of appropriate technologies and strengthen education and training, with financial and technical assistance from developed countries and International organizations.

* Issued as submitted.

¹ Participating MG&S present in RIM included representatives from: NGO, Science and Technology, Farmers, academia, Women and youth groups.

5. Be time-bound and easily monitored.
6. Invest in knowledge transfer and capacity-building as an essential tool for the ownership and localization of technology.
7. Integrate sustainable development in at all educational levels.
8. Initiate and enhance research focusing on sustainable development and green economy.
9. Spread out the national-level consultations to cover more countries in this region to ensure that the perspectives from a broad base of civil society, marginalized groups, and others previously left out of discussions on development priorities are taken into consideration. The national consultation process should involve all major group and civil society views equitably in all aspects of agenda setting, policy and implementation in order to reflect the multiple realities of local community needs.
10. Prioritize on access to education, better health care, clean water and sanitation and protection against crime and violence against children especially the girl child.

While highlighting the need for the SDG process to be de transparent, inclusive, gender sensitive, participatory and open to civil society as full partner.

Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015

RIM MG&S and CS participants highlighted the need to discuss the new development paradigm in order to achieve the goals; such a paradigm should take into consideration the need to rethink the role of the state, the economic objectives and the redistribution policies. The Rio+20 declaration mentioned “inequalities” in all their forms as a key challenge that should be addressed at the national and regional policy levels which reiterates the nexus between the three pillars (economic, social and environmental). This process should be coupled by the political and cultural enablers where good governance, transparency, accountability, participation, partnership, the respect of Human Rights and gender balance are prerequisites to meet the goals.

Institutional framework for sustainable development: global, regional and national interlinkages

We reiterate the need to improve the institutional framework for sustainable development while learning from the CSD lessons in the last 20 years to ensure a holistic oversight of sustainable development dimensions and goals with universal periodic high level monitoring of the progress on that front.

At the regional level, we call to establish the regional institutional framework for sustainable development that builds on the cooperation and partnership between civil society and the governments.

We believe that action, implementation and accountability must be at the core of the foundation of HLPF (high-level political forum). There must be a mechanism for tracking progress on the sustainable development goals in this forum. We call for greater and more transparent engagement of civil society and all stakeholders at all levels of decision-making with regards to agenda setting, policymaking and implementation. This engagement should be inclusive with a seamless information flow, so that all sections of civil society from all backgrounds, including groups traditionally marginalized from the decision-making process, are made a part of this engagement. Measures must be taken to include input and interventions from MGs and civil society in all high-level meetings and modalities for civil society participation must be well established taking into account the diversity at a local and regional level.

A green economy roadmap for the Arab region

RIM MG&S and CS participants consider that efforts to reach developmental goals should be sustainable; we thus consider that the green economy is an important tool to achieve sustainable development. However, we reiterate that this can't be unless it is coupled with a paradigm shift in the economic model that moves from "rentier" model of economy to a diversified, productive, job generating, gender sensitive and distributive economic model with minimal ecological footprints.

Arab regional and national initiatives for sustainable development

RIM MG&S and CS participants are committed to initiate and support national and regional initiatives on sustainable development. We anticipate that these initiatives ensure the healthy dialogue among all stakeholders.

RIM MG&S and CS participants call for the governments to enhance the regional cooperation toward the "Arab Common Markets"². We believe that region cooperation is a strategic choice for the Arab region to be able to face the challenges of the integration in the global economy and international trading system. There are real opportunities for a regional cooperation in terms of:

1. Implementing the political commitments and decision for the regional integration
2. Building and sharing capabilities and technologies,
3. Devising mechanisms for redistributing resource wealth in the region through directing the development funds toward sustainable development initiatives.

Conclusions

The Major Groups and Civil Society attending the Arab RIM call for the governments to actively participate at the global arena to protect the interests of the rights of the citizen in the region, which necessitate developing the technical and negotiating capacities and skills of the negotiators for a better performance in this regards.

MG&S and CS encourage the Arab Governments to consider developing the regional SDGs addressing our environment threats/needs and aspirations.

Finally we underline the importance to develop sustainable development strategies and set proper, equitable and inclusive implementation mechanisms in place. We would stress on the need to position assessment and evaluation at the heart of any sustainable development framework and post 2015 agenda. In this regard, we would support the global civil society efforts to designate 2015 as an international year of evaluation, and pledge the Arab governments to support so.

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² With reference to the decision of the league of Arab States to create a costume union by 2015.

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