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**Commission on Sustainable Development
Twentieth session**

**Report of the regional implementation meeting for the
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region**

Summary

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

The meeting offered a platform for deliberating and consensus building on the follow-up to the Rio+20 outcomes, identifying and discussing priorities for implementation of Rio+20 outcomes in the Arab region, and providing collective input into CSD-20 and key international processes and fora such as the high-level political forum (HLPF) for sustainable development and the process for the development of sustainable development goals (SDGs). In particular, discussions focused on the implications of

the main outcomes from Rio+20 for the region, the SDGs, the green economy, the HLPF and regional and national institutions for sustainable development, as well as regional and national sustainable development initiatives.

The meeting adopted a set of recommendations in the form of the “Dubai Document”, which 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) and forwarded to the League of Arab States to distribute to the Permanent Representatives of Arab countries in New York to guide Arab negotiators in meetings related to CSD-20, the HLPF and the Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organised the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM) on 29-30 May 2013 in Dubai, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the League of Arab States (LAS), and in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Environment and Water and the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment in the United Arab Emirates. A half-day meeting of major groups was also organised on 28 May 2013 prior to the official Arab RIM.

2. The Arab RIM was organised in the context of follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development referred to as Rio+20 which was convened in June 2012, and as part of ESCWA’s mandate to lead regional implementation meetings for the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The meeting

engaged Arab country government delegates from the economic, social and environmental spheres as well as representatives from major groups and regional and international organisations.

3. The objective of the Arab RIM was to provide a platform for:
 - Deliberating on the main outcomes from Rio+20 and their implications for the sustainable development agenda in the Arab region;
 - Identifying and discussing priorities for implementation as per the priorities and needs of Arab countries and the region; and
 - Preparing an outcome document to serve as the region's collective input into CSD-20 and the HLPF and other global processes relating to sustainable development.
4. This meeting report will be submitted to CSD-20 (which includes Arab representatives from Lebanon and Saudi Arabia) later in 2013 as the contribution of the Arab region to global follow-up from Rio+20 and will help to inform ongoing processes including the HLPF and the OWG on SDGs (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, UAE and Saudi Arabia from the Arab region are members of this Group).
5. The meeting consisted of an opening and closing session as well as five technical or substantive sessions addressing key outcomes from Rio+20 and regional and national implementation priorities for sustainable development.
6. The closing session resulted in the adoption of a set of recommendations known as the Dubai Document for the Arab Regional Implementation of Rio+20, which will be presented to JCEDAR and CAMRE and forwarded to the League of Arab States to distribute to the Permanent Representatives of Arab countries in New York to guide

Arab negotiators in meetings related to CSD-20, the HLPF and the sustainable development goals (see Annex B at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/2044/ReportEn.pdf>).

7. A joint position statement on the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting was also finalised by major groups, stakeholders and civil society (see Annex C at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/2044/ReportEn.pdf>).

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Discussions and negotiations in the final session of the Arab RIM led to the adoption of the ‘Dubai Document for the Arab regional implementation of Rio+20’, which includes a concise set of general and specific recommendations relating to the main outcomes from Rio+20 and regional implementation priorities. A selection of these recommendations has been reproduced in Box 1 below. The full version of the Dubai Document is reproduced in Annex B available at: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/2044/ReportEn.pdf>.

Box 1: A selection of recommendations from the ‘Dubai Document for the Arab regional implementation of Rio+20’

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

(1) 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 UN 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.

(2) Undertake an assessment and prepare a report on the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Initiative for the Arab Region.

(3) Emphasize that sustainable development programmes in the Arab region target 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.

(4) 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.

(5) 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.

(6) 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.

(7) 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".

(8) 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.

(9) 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.

(10) Present this document at the next meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment.

III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

9. The provisional agenda for the Arab RIM is included at Annex A available at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/2044/ReportEn.pdf>. The meeting comprised the following sessions:

- **Opening Ceremony:** Welcome and opening statements.
- **Session 1:** Overview of the main outcomes from Rio+20 and implications for the Arab region.
- **Session 2:** Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015.
- **Session 3:** A green economy roadmap for the Arab region.
- **Session 4:** Institutional framework for sustainable development: global, regional and national inter-linkages.
- **Session 5:** Arab regional and national initiatives for sustainable development.
- **Closing Session:** Discussion of RIM outcome document and report.

10. A summary of discussions from each session follows.

11. The official meeting was preceded by a half-day meeting of major groups on the afternoon of 28 May 2013. (See joint statement of major groups at Annex C at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/2044/ReportEn.pdf>).

A. OPENING SESSION

12. The opening ceremony of the meeting comprised statements from high-level representatives of organising partner organisations and the host country.

13. The session opened with a statement by HE Dr Rashid Ahmed Bin Fahad, Minister of Environment and Water, United Arab Emirates, who welcomed participants and highlighted that a key aim for the meeting was to operationalise the commitments

from Rio+20 in the Arab region. The statement also outlined the pioneering role that the UAE has played in the region in green growth and renewable energy.

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

15. 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 for developing the SDGs.

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

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

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

18. The session provided an overview of the meeting objectives and desired outcomes and explored the main outcomes from Rio+20 and their implications for the Arab region. The session 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 for post-2015, and a panel and open floor discussion. The session was moderated by Mr Saad Al-Numairy, advisor the Minister of Environment and Water, UAE.

19. Ms Roula Majdalani, ESCWA presented an overview of the meeting agenda, objectives and desired outcomes and posed a series of key questions to guide discussions during the meeting. She highlighted the global, regional and national inter-linkages for sustainable development and the importance of developing a regional roadmap for implementation of Rio+20 that addressed regional priorities and national challenges. She also underscored the need to update the 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 upon and scaling up national success stories in the Arab region. She also highlighted that the region faces a range of interlinking environmental, social and economic challenges and that Rio+20 provided some new tools to assist governments to address these challenges in an integrated way, including the SDGs, green economy, and enhanced institutions.

20. 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 MDGs through an inclusive process with sustainable development as the ultimate goal. The global agenda needs to be universal, transformative, people-centred and planet-sensitive. Key challenges in this regard included the rapid rise in energy consumption due to subsidies, increasing consumption of water and decreasing supply, and lifestyle changes leading to over consumption. National and regional consultations in the region undertaken in the context of the post-2015 agenda highlighted priorities for the region 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.

21. Ms Anhar Hegazi, ESCWA consultant, presented an overview of the Rio+20 outcomes and implications of the Arab region, highlighting that any regional roadmap for sustainable development will need to address regional priorities including energy security, water security, 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 to Rio+20 were generally taken into consideration and addressed in the Rio+20 outcome document. Green economy should be a mechanism for sustainable development, not a barrier, and Arab countries should consider how they can create effective legislative and supportive environments that can accelerate progress towards sustainable development and green economy. The importance of financing mechanisms and technology transfer were also highlighted.

22. Four panellists further informed discussions by providing insights from their experience. HE Dr Abusafieh, Minister of Environment, Palestine touched upon some key areas that need to be addressed to move the sustainable development agenda forward, including the role of education and awareness, the importance of broadening the scope of sustainable development from environmental management to encompass the three pillars, and the need to address unsustainable consumption and rejuvenate the Arab Environment Facility. Mr Rashid Al-Kuwari, Assistant Under-Secretary for Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Qatar outlined key regional conventions relating to sustainable development and emphasised the importance of enhancing engagement of the Arab region in all international fora with a united Arab regional roadmap and position. Mr Djamel Djaballah, LAS 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 10 years, as well as the need to develop intra-regional transfer of knowledge and innovation. Mr Jihad Azour, Former Finance Minister, Lebanon indicated that the region still views sustainable development as a challenge rather than an opportunity for progressing a regional agenda, underscored the need for growth and employment generation in the region and that countries should undertake scoping studies on investment opportunities for green economy in key sectors to present to Arab investors, as well as highlighting the need to reconsider financing mechanisms for sustainable development.

23. The moderated discussion that ensued consisted of interventions from Arab governments (Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, Kuwait, Tunisia,

Egypt and Jordan) as well as major groups (science and technology, NGOs) that highlighted a range of issues.

24. Several countries referenced the need for the international commitments made by developed countries to be realised, 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 from the old approach of viewing developing countries as recipients of knowledge and resources, to one that builds human capacity and development as the basis for innovation, opening markets and attracting investment. The need to have a joint Arab position on key international processes was stressed, including on the HLPF, the SDGs and financing for sustainable development. With regard to regional priorities, 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 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 stressed included the need to update the SDIAR and strengthening 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.

25. Representatives of major groups underscored the need for a paradigm shift to embrace green economy as a tool for sustainable development and the need for policies

that encourage scientific research and education reform to embrace sustainable development. They also stressed need to address inequalities at different levels and ensuring accountability and engagement of civil society in policy making and in developing a roadmap for the region.

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

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

27. Ms Michelle Obeid, University of Manchester, presented the key findings from a background paper “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 experience to date. She highlighted key conceptual challenges relating to how best to integrate 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 highlighted including peace and security, climate change, energy-food-water security, decent jobs, migration, urbanisation, and gender equality, amongst others.

28. Mr Waleed Zubari, Arabian Gulf University, highlighted some shortcomings of the MDGs; that they were formulated by donors and did not acknowledge the realities facing countries and that they addressed quantity instead of quality. He highlighted that the food-energy-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 inter-linkages and trade-offs between policy objectives, and the need for comprehensive plans for water and energy security.

29. 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 ongoing conflict in Syria and the severe strain that the escalating numbers of refugees are placing on development. Mr Kishan Khoday, UNDP Practice Leader for Energy & Environment in the Arab States, UNDP, highlighted the need for equitable access to energy, water and food and to support vulnerable communities where climate change is compounding existing problems, 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 look at the role of Arab investments in Asia and Africa with consequences for food and energy security.

30. A moderated plenary discussion ensued with interventions from Arab countries, major groups, and regional organisations. In their interventions, Arab countries highlighted a range of regional priority issues to be addressed by the SDGs, including peace and security, poverty eradication, freedom from 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 the 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, addressing differences between developed and developing countries, considering the needs of future generations and the importance of inclusive consultations on the post-2015 agenda at the country level.

31. Regional UN and LAS organisations highlighted the important role of regional institutions such as CAMRE and LAS for coordinating a unified position on the SDGs, as well as the importance of embracing the three dimensions of sustainable development.

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

33. Some key messages drawn from the discussions included that Arab countries need to contribute to the development of SDGs taking into account specific challenges of the Arab region such as demographic changes, lack of stability and governance, economic and food crises, and exploitation of natural resources. The importance of a universal agenda for both developed and developing countries was also acknowledged, and 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

34. The session discussed opportunities and priorities for the transition towards a green economy in the Arab region and analysis undertaken to date, and identified how the Arab region might operationalise 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.

35. Introducing the session, the moderator pointed to the need to look at all sectors, not only energy, and called for a “knowledge sharing institution” or platform for the green economy for the region. He also mentioned the work that UNEP is doing with partners at the global level through its Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE).

36. Ms Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Productive Sectors Section, ESCWA presented that green economy was adopted a Rio+20 as an important tool for sustainable development but there is not one-size-fits-all. Some countries in the Arab region now have national initiatives on green economy or green growth, and we need to look at how we can build upon or scale up these initiatives. ESCWA has undertaken preliminary work on mapping green economy policies, institutions, programs, and preliminary indicators to monitor progress in the Arab region, developing policy guidelines for decision-makers, and 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.

37. Mr Mohammed Abdrabo, University of Alexandria, presented preliminary results from an ongoing green economy study for the Arab region that is investigating

policy options for driving investment in the green economy across the key sectors of water, food and energy. The study is being coordinated by ESCWA and UNEP in response to a request by CAMRE. The study will focus on the four key sub-regions of GCC, LDCs, Maghreb and Mashreq and use a multi-criteria analysis to identify potential policy priorities for different groups.

38. 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 that foreign support will come to the region only when it has a long-term vision. The debate should not focus on what is green economy, but rather on how to implement green economy 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. Also mentioned were the need for the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation to change their ways of dealing with developing countries, including addressing the issue of conditionalities and trade distortions caused by developed countries. He mentioned the need for a centre of excellence on green economy in the region, focused on the exchange of best practices.

39. Mr Khaled Irani, Former Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, Jordan made a case for the adoption of the green economy based on the Jordanian example. He emphasized that governments should engage the private sector in sectors like 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 eco-tourism, which has generated income streams for local communities in remote areas.

40. The open plenary discussion reflected different viewpoints from Arab countries on the green economy and the way forward. Some countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Morocco have well-advanced plans or roadmaps. The UAE roadmap will be finalised in September 2013 and focuses on reduction of gas flaring, water use efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. Jordan has identified six target areas for their green economy work which have the potential to create 51,000 new job opportunities: 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, renewable energy plans, management of renewable water resources, restructuring the agricultural system, and reforming environmental taxes.

41. Other countries expressed concern that there was still no definition of green economy and that countries need to focus on their own priorities. Kuwait called for a regional meeting to discuss the definition of the green economy in the regional context, while Saudi Arabia questioned the methodology of the green economy study being 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, wellbeing and equality.

42. 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, and also

highlighted the importance of new indicators for measuring progress that go beyond GDP. The importance of empowering small farmers and women was also highlighted, including the introduction of enabling legislation and incentives to help them to shift towards the green economy.

**E. SESSION 4: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT –
GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INTER-LINKAGES**

43. The session provided an overview of the emerging global institutional framework for sustainable development and the global-regional-national inter-linkages, and explored opportunities for enhancing Arab regional and national institutions for sustainable development so that they better engage with international processes and better facilitate the implementation of sustainable development and 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.

44. Ms Irena Zubcevic and Mr David Le Blanc, Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA provided an overview of the emerging international framework for sustainable development including the 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 the CSD at the global, regional and national levels, including the need for an effective regional platform and enhancing regional engagement, as well as the importance of inter-regional dialogue. The 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 Regional Commissions, including fostering mainstreaming of sustainable development at the national level and engaging all relevant state and non-state actors. The HLPF should engage Regional Commissions more systematically in HLPF sessions and support interregional dialogues.

45. Ms Melanie Hutchinson, Programme Officer, UNEP provided an overview of the processes to date 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, strengthening the regional presence of UNEP and capacity building, and that the first universal Governing Council of UNEP was held in February 2013. She also highlighted UNEP's progress in establishing an International Advisory Council for the Advancement of Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability. She outlined that environmental sustainability will need to be addressed in the SDGs in a balanced way. 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.

46. 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-national inter-linkages within the new framework of the HLPF, and stressed that the Arab region needed to stay engaged with the international processes stemming from Rio+20, including the HLPF, SDGs process, and the financing strategy. Some key issues for governments to consider included how regional

institutions can best support Rio+20 follow-up, how institutional arrangements can enhance integration of the three dimensions, and how green economy can best be applied by the region. A key gap for the region has been the allocation of sustainable development largely to environmental institutions which has limited a fully integrated approach to decision making. CAMRE and the 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 the HLPF, ESCWA, LAS and UNEP should continue to organise regional meetings and enhance 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.

47. Two expert panellists then provided their insights on institutions for sustainable development. Ms Mona Makram-Ebeid, Senator, Egypt referred to the SDGs and that they must inspire regional and local governments, civil society and individuals to change their behaviour, and the need for an integrated approach to decision making that addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development. She highlighted the key role of parliaments to achieve sustainable development commitments and proposed a new perspective on sustainable development with the economy servicing 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 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 that national strategies for sustainable development have suffered in the past from poor implementation as they are not effectively integrated into the institutional framework.

48. A moderated plenary discussion followed with interventions from Arab countries, major groups, and regional organisations. Countries had differing views on the need for institutional reform. Saudi Arabia highlighted the success of regional institutions such as CAMRE, the development of sustainable development indicators and that the region was leading the world in national institutions for sustainable development. Several countries, including Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Iraq highlighted the key institutional gap being the allocation of sustainable development to the environment pillar and lack of effective institutional mechanisms for integration of the three dimensions. Jordan highlighted that the institutional framework needed to be reformed to address new and emerging issues including food, energy and financial crises. Tunisia and Iraq recognised 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 capitalise on regional success stories in all key sectors.

49. Major groups made a number of key points: the need to capitalise on lessons learned from CSD at the international level with a mandate for SDGs; establish an optimal mechanism in LAS which includes all sectoral ministries, not just environment, with 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

50. The session discussed the experience in the region with the SDIAR, including its successes, shortcomings and gaps and the best way forward for updating the SDIAR so that it provides an enhanced mechanism for accelerating the implementation of sustainable development in the region. The session 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.

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

52. Mr Ibrahim Abdel Gelil, Arabian Gulf University, presented a background paper which proposes a framework for updating the SDIAR. He highlighted the need to review existing strategies, progress and gaps rather than developing new strategies.

Key priorities proposed for inclusion in the SDIAR included peace and security, 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 operationalise the SDIAR, an action plan is required, which will require governments to answer key questions including who, what, when and at what cost. He outlined the need for sub-regional plans, Arab-Arab cooperation and an Arab Environment Facility to address means of implementation.

53. 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 OECD to adopt the green economy concept and with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on a national strategy for green jobs.

54. Ms Capricia Chabarekh, Environmental Specialist, ECODIT Liban, Lebanon outlined Lebanon's national report to Rio+20 and provided an overview of Lebanon'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.

55. 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 participation of civil society and empowerment of women to serve the process of implementation.

56. The moderator highlighted some key questions for updating the SDIAR, including the consideration of sub-regional differences, the role of national governments and regional institutions, provision of financial resources, indicators and monitoring of the 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.

57. 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 the 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.

58. The Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development highlighted three points: that the SDIAR update should include participation of Arab organisations; that a meeting should be organised to ensure consistency and synergies with existing

strategies; and that Arab funds should open windows for funding sustainable development in the region.

59. The major groups supported the need to update the 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.

60. A final presentation by Ms Fatma Sahib Al Habashi, Ministry of Environment and Water, UAE provided an overview of the UAE's national plan for green growth (GGP) which is being 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 UAE's green growth 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 GGP team guidance, and sectoral strategies will be integrated and synergised to form a national strategic framework for policy making. 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

61. 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 CAMRE session in 2013) along with representatives from the organising partners LAS, ESCWA and UNEP as well as the host country, UAE. 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.

62. 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.

63. 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 to 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.

64. With regard to the 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.

65. Country delegates also supported the effective partnership between ESCWA, UNEP and LAS with regard to sustainable development and coordinating post-Rio+20 follow-up activities. Delegates supported the update of the SDIAR and requested that a progress report be prepared, and asked that ESCWA prepare a periodic follow-up report on the implementation of the outcomes of Rio+20 in Arab countries.

66. Regional organisations 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 policy making.

67. At the close of the session, it was agreed that the Dubai Document would be circulated for final comment and then finalised and submitted to the League of Arab States to send to the Permanent Representatives of Arab countries in New York to guide them in meetings and preparations for CSD-20, the HLPF, and consultative meetings on the SDGs. It was also agreed that the document would be submitted to CAMRE.

68. The chairs closed the meeting by expressing gratitude to the Government of the UAE for hosting the meeting and the organising partners and all participants for their contributions.

IV. ORGANISATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE

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

B. AGENDA

70. The provisional agenda for the Arab RIM is included in Annex A at: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpc/2044/ReportEn.pdf>. The meeting comprised the following sessions:

- **Opening Ceremony:** Welcome and opening statements.
- **Session 1:** Overview of the main outcomes from Rio+20 and implications for the Arab region.
- **Session 2:** Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015.
- **Session 3:** A green economy roadmap for the Arab region.
- **Session 4:** Institutional framework for sustainable development: global, regional and national inter-linkages.
- **Session 5:** Arab regional and national initiatives for sustainable development.
- **Closing Session:** Discussion of RIM outcome document and report.

C. PARTICIPANTS

71. The meeting was attended by a total of 149 participants, including representatives of the organising partners and host country. A total of 77 participants

represented 18 Arab governments, while representation by major groups and civil society was prominent, with 15 participants. It is noteworthy that government representation covered a variety of ministries, including foreign affairs, environment, social affairs, planning, finance, economy, energy, trade and agriculture.

72. The full list of participants is included in Annex C at: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/2044/ReportEn.pdf>.

D. EVALUATION

73. 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% rated the overall quality of the meeting as good to excellent quality. A total of 92% of respondents rated the quality of the meeting documentation as good to excellent, while a total of 78% rated the quality of the presentations as good to excellent. All of the respondents (100%) thought that the meeting provided a good to excellent opportunity for networking and experience sharing among experts. A total of 77% of respondents rated the clarity of the meeting objectives as good to excellent, while 70% thought that the meeting was good to excellent at meeting its objectives. When asked about the need for follow-up to the results of the meeting, almost all respondents (98%) were positive.

74. 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 economic and social dimensions.

75. With regard to follow-up work, there was an overwhelming response in support for follow-up activities, with numerous suggestions from participants primarily focusing on enhancing communication, networking, experience sharing and consultation. Key proposals included:

- Create a network of sustainable development focal points based on the meeting participants and advise on follow-up to the meeting;
- ESCWA to prepare a regular bulletin to be dispatched to Arab experts and stakeholders updating them on progress made and ongoing negotiations on issues related to Rio+20 outcomes, particularly the SDGs, HLPF and financing strategy;
- Sharing the Arab RIM outcomes formally with relevant stakeholders the international community;
- Organise a follow-up meeting to support continued country consultations on suitable financing mechanisms for sustainable development and SDGs;
- Organise 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; and
- ESCWA in collaboration with concerned parties to develop a specific methodology for indicators to measure progress in green economy.

E. DOCUMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

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