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**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and  
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)**

**Stakeholder Consultation Workshop**

**“Rio+20, National Policy-Making and Sustainable Development Policies in  
Conflict-Affected Countries: the case of Lebanon”**

**Date:** May 2, 2012

**Location:** UN House, Beirut, Lebanon

**Workshop Report**

**SUMMARY**

The UN House hosted the workshop “Rio+20, National Policy-Making and Sustainable Development Policies in Conflict-Affected Countries: the case of Lebanon,” a collaboration between the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in the context of the project “I-ROA 105 Strengthening national capacity for the integration of sustainable development principles into development strategies in countries emerging from conflict”. The workshop was delivered through an effective collaboration between ESCWA’s Emerging and Conflict Related Issues (ECRI) and Sustainable Development and Productivity Divisions (SDPD).

Participants for this one-day workshop included representatives from Lebanon’s government, civil society, United Nations organizations, donors and international partners. Key stakeholders were encouraged to reflect upon Lebanon’s sustainable development strategies in the context of the “Review and Assessment of Capacity for Sustainable Development in Lebanon” publication issued by ESCWA. The preparation process and primary themes of the upcoming United Nations Sustainable Development Conference Rio+20 were also addressed and participants proposed recommendations to guide Lebanon’s continuing path toward long-term sustainable development.

This report provides further detail on the background of sustainable development and the Rio+20 preparations in Lebanon, highlights key discussion topics throughout the workshop and outlines participants’ recommendations moving forward. The next steps for this project include a regional workshop, which will provide a forum for the exchange of experiences across ESCWA countries and foster cooperation for the integration of sustainable development practices into national development strategies.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Despite abundance in capacity and knowledge in both the private and public sectors, efforts to achieve sustainable development in Lebanon have not been fully effective due to the absence of formal inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral mechanisms of coordination and collaboration. Instead of aggregating their work institutions have formulated to date individual development plans, which are a good first step, but fall short in achieving an overall sustainable development national strategy .

It is in this context, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is implementing a project in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) to support conflict-affected countries like Lebanon to integrate sustainable development practices into national strategies to build a sustainable future.

The timeliness of this project cannot be overstated, as the ESCWA region is witnessing major changes in both its governance and developmental paradigms. The Arab uprisings have brought forth a set of imminent priorities that can no longer be ignored. These priorities include equitable growth, generation of employment, meaningful political participation, especially for youth and women, and sustainable development for a prosperous future. Indeed, the framework of this future in sustainable development has an opportunity to be uniquely shaped at the upcoming United Nations Sustainable Development Conference in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20), in July 2012.

Indeed, Rio+20 serves as an opportunity for Lebanon to reverse these trends and create concrete policies on sustainable development. Such policies would not only advance environmental concerns, but look at the comprehensive integration of the three sustainable development pillars –environment, economy and social affairs- to formulate a long-term national strategy. In doing so, the standard of living for its citizens can be elevated and sustainable peace and development can be promoted.

## **BACKGROUND**

Like many countries emerging from conflict, Lebanon faces the challenge of working towards a national strategy that would integrate sustainable development and peace building approaches. The process of national sustainable development in Lebanon is distinctive from other countries as the nation does not currently have a National Poverty Reduction Strategy. Rather, it has a number of development strategies that have emerged from different ministries and organizations. In the past decade, Lebanon's strategies for reform have focused on more comprehensive approaches that recognize aspects of sustainable development, that aim to be participatory and consultative in nature and that attempt to synergize economy, society and environment.

Achievements and challenges of planning, drafting, and implementing national strategies and policies, however, are not divorced from the political context. Lebanon is not the exemption, as economic, social, environmental, and political performances have been shaped by its recent political history. This has unfortunately delayed the country on its track towards sustainable development.

In the light of this, ESCWA released last year the report “Review and Assessment of Capacity for Sustainable Development in Lebanon”<sup>1</sup> to highlight the achievements and challenges of planning, drafting and implementing national strategies and policies that would integrate sustainable development and peace building approaches in Lebanon’s political context. ESCWA also organized the first Stakeholder Consultation Workshop “Strengthening Capacity to Utilize Sustainable Development Principles in National Policy-Making in Lebanon”<sup>2</sup>, in September 2011 with stakeholders from government, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to promote trans-sectoral dialogue on national sustainable development policy-making in Lebanon.

Additionally, to guide the process in all countries where this project is being implemented, DESA developed the “Guidance Notes for Developing National Sustainable Development Strategies”<sup>3</sup>, to help governments address the interlinked challenges of peacebuilding and sustainable development, and more specifically, to provide guidance on how to approach sustainable development in conflict-affected countries. Finally, ESCWA produced the report “Guidance Notes and Recommendations for Sustainable Development Planning in Lebanon”<sup>4</sup> to address some of the gaps that Lebanon currently faces in sustainable development such as inter-ministerial collaboration, the inclusion of social and environmental aspects in sustainable development strategies and the inclusion of civil society in the design of said strategies.

The Rio+20 conference promises a global conversation around sustainable development. The Conference has been organized to ensure a balance between economic, social and environmental development.

In preparation of the Conference, the Arab position has been harmonized through a number of regional meetings. Lebanon was dynamic in this preparatory process, actively participating in the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting, held in Cairo in October 2011. With representatives from the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Environment, this meeting resulted in a single document containing the results and recommendations that expressed a clear and consistent position among Arab countries, including Lebanon. In parallel to these official meetings, civil society and private sector representatives from Lebanon have also participated in a number of national workshops on the topics of Green industry and finance, as well as, trade and environment protection.

It is under this background that the second Stakeholder’s Consultative Workshop “Rio+20, National Policy-Making and Sustainable Development Policies in Conflict-Affected Countries: the Case of Lebanon,” was convened. While regional negotiations to lobby the priorities and challenges of the Arab

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/ECRI/projects/1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/ECRI/projects/2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)(2011). ‘Development Guidance Notes - Developing National Sustainable Development Strategies in Post-Conflict Countries. Strengthening National Capacity for the Integration of Sustainable Development Principles into Development Strategies in Countries Emerging from Conflict’

<sup>4</sup> Available at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/ECRI/projects/3.pdf>

region into a final outcome document from Rio+20 are finalized, this workshop serves to capitalize on the momentum created from the Conference to advance sustainable development in Lebanon.

## OBJECTIVES

The stakeholder consultation workshop achieved the following predefined objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Share sustainable development gaps and opportunities in Lebanon.
- **Objective 2:** Overview the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 (Rio +20) and the region's position with regard to its objectives and themes.
- **Objective 3:** Discuss the country's existing sustainable development strategies in the context of the upcoming Rio+20 conference on sustainable development and beyond.
- **Objective 4:** Develop recommendations to achieve goals and address challenges in national sustainable development strategy planning in Lebanon.
- **Objective 5:** Facilitate networking between professionals with different types of expertise.

## ATTENDANCE

The Stakeholder Consultation Workshop saw broad representation of various Lebanese stakeholders. Twenty-five participants attended, representing the Ministries of Agriculture, Education & Higher Education (MEHE), Health, Environment, Finance, State for Administrative Reform, Planning (Council for Development & Reconstruction) and the Central Bank. Representatives from various CSOs, and partners from UNDP and the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon also were present. Mr. Ziad Mikati from the Presidency of the Council of Ministries and Mr. Seifeldin Abbato, Country Director from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as Mr. Tarik Alami and Ms. Reem Nejdawi from ESCWA offered the opening remarks (See Annex 2 for a full list of attendees).

## LANGUAGE

Speeches, presentations and discussions flowed back and forth between Arabic and English throughout the day. Arabic/English simultaneous translations were available, allowing all participants to comfortably contribute.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

Keynote speakers, Mr. Ziad Mikati kicked-off the day by highlighting the current efforts of sustainable development in Lebanon. Dr. Seifeldin Abbato addressed the history of the concept of sustainable development and highlighted the shifting language, despite the recurring needs. Both speakers stressed that Lebanon still suffers from a lack of coordination and vision in its development initiatives.

Upon recommendations advanced by stakeholders taking part in the previous consultative meeting as well as project reports that elaborated on the need for an official mechanism of coordination, the Office of the Prime Minister responded by creating the “Aid Effectiveness Unit.” The aim of the unit is to produce a matrix to organize work between donors at a national level. It also hopes to further engage youth, an often marginalized segment of the community, in the debate on sustainable development, hence responding to the call for a wider participation if a sense of ownership of a sustainable development vision is to be fostered in Lebanon. Informing the audience that 40 percent of Lebanon’s population is under the age of 30, the Prime Minister Office plans to include a youth budget line in each fiscal year and has compiled a list of over 100 recommendations to increase youth engagement and status within the country.

Meanwhile, Mr. Abbato addressed Lebanon’s lack of vision on development plans. This ineffective approach has contributed to the perpetual state of “latent conflict” in the country, robbing it of its potential to fully transition into a stable state. As such, UNDP has established a number of partnerships with Lebanese ministries to strengthen the institutions of civil service and enhance its overall capacity to respond to the country’s needs. The result of these partnerships, however, has been mixed, as the Lebanese Government still struggles with policy formation at the national level to guide ministerial work.

*a. Gaps and Opportunities for Sustainable Development in Lebanon*

Building on the opening remarks, the workshop’s first session aimed to discuss Lebanon’s response to DESA’s Guidance Notes. ESCWA highlighted gaps and opportunities, discussed in the ESCWA report “Guidance Notes and Recommendations for Sustainable Development Planning in Lebanon”<sup>5</sup>. Discussions took place around practical hands-on recommendations for the implementation for sustainable development planning.

One of the primary gaps identified by the report in facing the implementation of sustainable development in Lebanon includes a lack of consensus in understanding the conflict and the ‘mantra’ of sectarianism which have given life to perceived unchangeable historical facts. Participants suggested that these challenges could be bridged by setting objectives between the immediate and long-term that could increase consensus and unveil inconsistencies about partial historical truths.

The report also highlighted that the emphasis on economic development in Lebanon has disrupted the balance between economic needs with social and environmental concerns. The lack of coordination and the common duplication of efforts among actors also have contributed to this disconnect. To break-down these obstacles, integrated cross-sectoral planning, linkages of environmental implications to other development initiatives and involvement of regions outside of Beirut in sustainable development discussions would need to emerge. Participants mentioned that linkages between sustainability and development seem to be missing in Lebanon.

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<sup>5</sup>Available at <http://css.escwa.org.lb/ECRI/projects/3.pdf>

Another recognized gap in the report is the temporary and often changing dynamics of government, which has led to a lack of continuity in initiatives within Lebanon. The tendency to have reactive policy-making, based on emergencies, also troubles the management process. Participants recommended planning initiatives that absorbed emergencies and coordinating through an inter-ministerial body to confront this gap. Also, participants indicated that depoliticizing sustainable development initiatives was essential to build these capacities for sustainable development.

Participants ended this session with an inquiry on whether a clear definition of 'the state' was necessary before sustainable initiatives could be implemented. While lack of political will was brought up, ESCWA encouraged participants to think about the opportunities to build on previous achievements and offer suggestions that could be implemented by maneuvering within the existing institutional structures.

In this session, a participant interjected with a presentation of a working paper prepared by the Ministry of Environment in preparation for Rio+20 conference. The paper will serve as the national report at Rio+20 in June and was distributed during the workshop. The report mirrored the economic, social and environmental approach to sustainable development, but also added environmental governance as another important component that could provide institutional guidance in achieving the goals put forward by the Rio+20 conference.

#### *b. Sustainable Development in the context of Rio+20 and in the Arab Region*

This session broadly familiarized participants with the processes surrounding the Rio+20 Conference. Participants benefitted from the information that clarified the otherwise complex workings of these international conferences: avenues for negotiation, agenda settings, governmental and expert groups, main events versus side events, among others.

In the second session, participants were introduced to the sequence of consultative events that took place in preparation for the Rio+20 conference. Though the concepts of sustainable development are rooted in the United Nations Environmental Conferences and the Rio Conference in 1992, which focused primarily on environmental protection, the role of the Green Economy and the need for institutional frameworks were presented as the focus of Rio+20.

Despite the fact that no single definition for Green Economy exists, a number of its characteristics were covered in the first presentation. One featured highlighted was green jobs, which are seen as a real solution not only to environmental concerns, but also economic and social challenges. Case studies from Egypt and Lebanon were used to illustrate job creation opportunities in energy production, waste management, construction, agriculture and forestation. Participants were reminded, however, that the Green Economy, though important, was only one component of sustainable development.

Initial response to the presentation was mixed, as many were concerned about the application of Green Economy in Lebanon. The argument was made that Lebanon's labor market was already too small for the inclusion of green jobs. There was also unease with the fact that green jobs might take qualified

candidates away from other critical positions. These comments were addressed with an analysis of the phenomenon of unemployment in Lebanon and the region, which involves medium to highly educated youth and who have ideal profiles to staff Green Economy opportunities.

As the discussion on Green Economy came to a close, another presentation was given on the Arab consultative process and the region's position with regard to the objectives and themes of Rio+20. Specifically, this section focused on the Zero Draft Outcome Document which seeks to renew political commitment for sustainable development and give member states an opportunity to contribute to the agenda and outcomes of the Conference.

The Arab position toward the document, under the G77 + China grouping, reconfirmed the region's commitments to Rio principles, but also highlighted the need for additional negotiation time between member-states, as well as, the need for additional action-oriented text. Though expectations were low in terms of statements that outlined concrete commitments from member states, particularly on advancing the Green Economy, ESCWA suggested that consensus from the Rio+20 conference could still emerge and would likely focus on the need to develop institutions to manage and coordinate sustainable development initiatives.

The discussion was beneficial as it allowed participants to use the general guidelines from the regional and international processes to reflect on ways to advance agendas that suit Lebanon's needs. The prospect of institutional development, questions about the extent to which countries would be bound to action and the local control that would be given to countries to create these venues were raised. It was clarified that a recommendation that encourages states to create inter-ministerial bodies for coordination of sustainable development, for example, would be ultimately up to the member-states to implement. Such outcomes though, would place a precedent and give governments the incentive to build the necessary institutional framework, as a first step, to achieving additional sustainable development goals like Green Economy.

Participants raised a question concerning the Lebanese sustainable development agenda and how it would be pushed forward during Rio+20, recognizing the small window of opportunity the country has as a member of the much larger G77 coalition. ESCWA alerted the audience to the fact that side events and remarks by the Prime Minister at the conference were opportunities for the Government to make commitments for sustainable development.

Finally, these discussions were framed by the realization that rather than being a panacea for all development issues, the goals embodied by the Conference are a part of a comprehensive, gradual approach by the United Nations to poverty reduction which offers an important framework to guide future development initiatives.

### *c. Achieving Sustainable Development in Lebanon*

The workshop concluded with a break out session to further discuss the Zero Draft Outcome Document and develop possible action steps in anticipation of Rio+20 and following the Conference's completion. Participants were noticeably engaged and provided meaningful recommendations for Lebanon's



participation in the Rio+20 process and for the implementation of sustainable development principles in Lebanon.

The Zero Draft Outcome Document exercise was used to display the difficulty it takes to achieve consensus among the various member-states, but also to measure the relevance of the text in the Lebanese context. To do this, small groups were asked a) whether articles 15 and 87-that mainly cater to conflict-affected countries- of the Zero Draft Outcome Document represented Lebanon's challenges and b) to present their findings for discussion (See Annex 3 for hand out).

Participants' responses to these texts varied. Some felt Article 15 was too vague and needed to be more concrete, in terms such as "special attention" "conflict" and "fragility. Others, however, voiced that the article was consistent with Lebanon's needs, as the country does occasionally suffer from droughts, desertification and floods. Meanwhile, Article 87 seemed to resonate with most participants. One example given included the fact that Lebanon and Israel's shared national resources, including transboundary waters pose serious security risks and thus raise the challenge of finding "potential pathways for enhanced cooperation, dialogue and confidence building."

In groups, participants brainstormed about strategies to implement sustainable development, involve civil society and ensure the momentum of Rio+20 was maintained after the conference's culmination. A full list of recommendations emerged from this discussion to help Lebanese stakeholders unify their message and coordinate efforts before Rio+20, endorse the implementation of sustainable development principles at the Conference, integrate sustainable development into national policies and institutionalize a coordinative body to guide ministerial work once the delegation has returned from the conference. Further details on the recommendations include:

1. *Unify message and coordinate efforts before Rio+20*
  - Create "Rio+20 Task Force" through the Prime Minister Office to coordinate Lebanon's approach to the conference. The task force should include broad membership from civil society, the private sector and the public administration.
  - Develop a local website that gathers documentation relevant to Rio+20 available to various stakeholders in Lebanon. This could be housed at the Prime Minister Office.
  - Encourage stakeholders to submit one national report to Rio+20 that reflects various Lebanese viewpoints.
2. *Endorse the implementation of sustainable development principles at Rio+20*
  - Affirm Lebanon's commitment to further the implementation of sustainable development during official meetings.
  - Utilize side events to highlight Lebanon's achievements and future goals in advancing sustainable development.
3. *Integrate sustainable development into national policies post Rio+20*
  - Sustain "Rio+20 Task Force" within the Prime Minister's Office to build upon the momentum gained from the Conference and prepare the ground for a permanent coordinative body.

- Reconvene a workshop to discuss Rio+20 and confirm sustainable development priorities for Lebanon.
  - Engage senior government officials to ensure political commitment to sustainable development goals.
  - Promote concepts of sustainable development among civil society, media, private sector and civil servants.
4. *Institutionalize a coordinative body to align governmental vision and ministerial work.*<sup>6</sup>
- Ensure that civil society organizations and ministries are represented and encourage the participation of the private sector.
  - Achieve agreement upon a customized definition of sustainable development.
  - Sustain Rio+20 goals through increased funding for both the coordinative body and advocacy of sustainable development.

## FOLLOW-UP AND NEXT STEPS

Before the day came to a close, participants were informed of key milestones taking place before the Rio+20 conference, including informal negotiation sessions for the global community and relevant events in the region. Participants were also told about a follow-up meeting planned by DESA and ESCWA (tentatively 11 and 12 of July 2012) at the UN House in Beirut. This workshop plans to familiarize interested ESCWA countries with conflict-sensitive methodologies and guidelines, to share experiences, follow-up on the Rio+20 Conference and foster cooperation for the integration of sustainable development practices.

### *Meeting materials*

All meeting materials were distributed in a CD to participants (available upon request at [ortizperez@un.org](mailto:ortizperez@un.org))

The workshop report, as well as main presentations and sample templates are also posted on ESCWA's website (<http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/ecri.asp?division=ecri>) under the project header "Strengthening National Capacity for the Integration of Sustainable Development Principles into Development Strategies in Lebanon".

Further details on ESCWA/DESA collaboration can be found in DESA's website ([http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd\\_aofw\\_nsd/issuues.shtml](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_nsd/issuues.shtml)) under Pilot Countries – Lebanon.

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<sup>6</sup> Participants expressed that this body would be a permanent committee within the Government used to streamline sustainable development initiatives across the various ministries.

## ANNEX 1: PROGRAM AGENDA

# E

## UNITED NATIONS



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL**

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

**National Stakeholders' Consultation Workshop**  
**"Rio+20, National Policy-Making and Sustainable Development Policies in Conflict-Affected**  
**Countries: the case of Lebanon"**  
**UN House, Beirut - May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012**

<b>Work Programme</b>		
9:00	<i>Registration</i>	
9:30	Welcome	ECRI and SDPD
10:00	Opening Remarks	Prime Minister's Office
10:15	Keynote Speaker: Strengthening institutional capacity and providing policy support in Lebanon	UNDP
10:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
10:45	<p><b>Session 1: Sustainable development in Lebanon, gaps and opportunities</b></p> <p>This session will be based on ESCWA's report and aims to discuss Lebanon's response to DESA's Guidance Notes. It will highlight some of the gaps and deploy group discussions to reach consensus on practical hands-on recommendations for the implementation of sustainable development planning.</p>	Presentation from ECRI
12:30	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:30	<p><b>Session 2: Sustainable Development in the Arab region</b></p> <p>This session will serve as an introduction to the upcoming Rio+20 Conference and its expected outcome document, as well as sustainable development efforts in the region. This session will focus on a presentation of the Arab consultative process and the region's position with regard to the objectives and themes of the Conference as embodied in the "Arab Declaration".</p>	Presentation from SDPD
3:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
3:15	<p><b>Session 3: Lebanon's efforts towards sustainable development, recommendations and next steps</b></p> <p>This session aims to discuss opportunities and challenges to follow up and implement on global sustainable development strategies and directives in the Arab region, and specifically the Lebanese context. It will aim to respond to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happens until Rio+20? How can CSOs and ministries be involved in future efforts towards sustainable development in Lebanon?</li> <li>• Where to find more information on Rio+20 and sustainable development in Lebanon?</li> <li>• What next steps can be expected after Rio+20 and beyond?</li> </ul>	Co-facilitation from SDPD and ECRI
4:30	<i>Workshop Adjourns</i>	

## ANNEX 2: LIST OF ATTENDEES

### “Rio+20, National Policy-Making and Sustainable Development Policies in Conflict-Affected Countries: The case of Lebanon”

2 May 2012  
UN House, Lebanon

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## ANNEX 3: WORKSHOP HANDOUT

### Rio+20, National Policy Making and Sustainable Development Policies in Conflict-Afflicted Countries: The case of Lebanon”

#### Zero Draft Outcome Document:

#### Language related to conflict afflicted countries

•15. *We recognize the special challenges facing least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, Small Island developing States, middle-income countries and African countries. (zero draft)*

•[15. We recognize the special challenges facing **[the most vulnerable countries and in particular – EU]** least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, **[mountainous developing states, - Switzerland, Kyrgyzstan; G77, EU delete]** Small Island developing States, **[middle-income countries – Japan, G77, Canada, EU delete; Belarus, Kazakhstan retain]** and African countries **[particularly those affected by drought, desertification and floods. Countries in situations of conflict and fragility also need special attention. – EU; G77 delete]** –G77 delete para]

•CST 15. *We recognize the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries and in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, Small Island Developing States, middle-income countries and African countries, especially those affected by drought, desertification and floods. Countries in situations of conflict and fragility also need special attention. (15) (Text proposed by Secretariat)*

•87. We reiterate the call for disaster risk reduction to continue to be addressed in the context of sustainable development and placed within the post-2015 development agenda. We call for increased coordination among national, regional and international levels for a robust response to environmental emergencies and improved forecasting and early warning systems, as well as closer coordination between emergency response, early recovery and development efforts, including adoption of a post “Hyogo Framework” and its integration into development policy. (zero draft)

•[87. **non** We stress the need to address the relation between security, development and environment. Armed conflicts and fragility remain a major impediment to sustainable development in many parts of the world. Natural resource scarcity and climate change may further exacerbate tensions and pose risks for international peace and security. At the same time, shared natural resources, including transboundary waters and hazards should also be seen as potential pathways for enhanced cooperation, dialogue and confidence building. – EU, Norway; New Zealand consider more action-oriented language; G77 delete]