

Statement on Proposed Policies and Measures for the Arab Region on the Thematic Areas of CSD-17

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Policies and Measures

- Proposed policies and measures provided in the statement and the subsequent matrices generally support the following types of interventions and instruments:

- Capacity Building
- Institution Building
- Private Sector Development
- Community-Based Development, with focus on women and youth
- Access to Finance
- Scientific Research and Development
- Technology Transfer
- Knowledge Management
- Risk Mitigation and Early-Warning Systems

UN-ESCWA and the Arab Region

- UN-ESCWA is relaying the outcome of consultations conducted at the Arab regional level in view of its mandate to support regional preparations for CSD processes through the:
 - Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR); and
 - Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE)
- UN-ESCWA supports these regional mechanisms with UNEP/ROWA and the CAMRE Technical Secretariat at the League of Arab States.
- Arab Member States thus vetted and approved the resulting:
 - "Report of the regional implementation meeting of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia" in Nov 2007 (submitted to CSD-16)
 - "Statement on Proposed Policies and Measures for the Arab Region on the Thematic Areas of CSD-17" in Nov 2008 (submitted to CSD-17)

Agriculture

Policies	Measures
Increasing investments in agricultural production & achieving food security through projects and activities based on rural agricultural development priorities aimed at increasing the revenue of farmers	Implementing the 2007 Sustainable Arab Agricultural Development Strategy, and including it within the national development priorities of countries
Coping with the requirements of the world food crisis and the current financial crisis, and encouraging community-based indigenous approaches to sustainable food production	Designing and implementing urgent national and regional strategies to cope with food shortages through the expansion of existing capacities and infrastructure of strategic food reserves, thereby increasing productivity of rural farming and achieving food security
Supporting the production and marketing of agricultural products and ensuring the quality and competitiveness of these products	Establishing and harmonizing norms, standards and specific actions for agricultural commodities and the protection of relevant intellectual property rights
Drafting legislation on veterinary quarantine & phytosanitary issues	
Improving the productivity, efficiency and competitiveness of regional agricultural production sectors, especially among SMEs	Supporting good practices in agriculture as a tool for achieving sustainable development in the Arab region
Supporting scientific research and agricultural extension activities	Investing in scientific research on improving agricultural technologies and transferring appropriate and new technologies, especially biotechnology applications and biodiversity techniques
Enhancing natural resources management in order to ensure greater environmental protection, particularly with regard to land & water use efficiency	Promoting methods to rationalize the use of natural resources in agriculture
Supporting institutions working in the agricultural sphere, raising staff competence levels and enhancing the technical, scientific and management capabilities of their workers	Building human and institutional capacity through sound and innovative programmes and projects
Developing a network of support institutions for income-generating projects and rural development activities aimed at poverty alleviation and achieving food security for rural communities	
Enabling the participation of women in all aspects of agricultural development activities	

Overcoming Challenge and Constraints

- As one of the most arid and water scarce areas in the world, the Arab Region must overcome daunting challenges and constraints when addressing agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification.
- In considering proposed policies and measures included in the statement, it is thus useful to consider the following:
 - Structural policy changes due to concerns regarding food security
 - Several Gulf countries have shifted from a food self-sufficiency policy to one that looks to other Arab countries, Africa and Asia to ensure food security due to:
 - Increasing land degradation, water scarcity, drought and desertification; as well as
 - Opportunities presented by trade liberalization and South-South cooperation
 - The Financial Crisis and Price Volatility of primary commodities and fuel have increased stress on rural and urban communities, prompting Governments in several Mashreq & Maghreb countries to re-commit to Agricultural Development
 - Non-conventional water resources are no longer so unconventional
 - Desalination and water reuse have become major components of water supply development programs in many Arab countries to support agriculture, combat land degradation through green belts, and meet basic needs.
 - Conflict and crisis continue to plague the region, making it difficult to engage in long-term strategic and integrated planning involving land and water resources.
 - Climate change, population growth & unsustainable consumption and production patterns are creating multiplier effects that render more difficult policy planning and implementation in the region.

Rural Development

Policies	Measures
Adopting a rights-based approach in the design and implementation of rural development strategies	Empowering rural populations to actively engage in knowledge-based economies, which are crucial to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals
Ensuring a balanced development of rural and urban areas in order to reverse the trend of rural-urban migration	
Encouraging a sustainable livelihoods approach in the development of rural areas	Supporting local development in rural areas, without losing sight of the larger picture, and ensuring the development of the production chain in an effective and balanced way
Ensuring equitable access to resources, infrastructure and services and empowering rural women to actively participate in development efforts	Planning and investing in the development of effective knowledge and communication systems to support sustainable rural development
Increasing investments and strengthening the role of community-based organizations in the provision of development incentives, especially water resources and agricultural inputs	Financing projects for small-scale farmers and improving rural market information services and infrastructure
Narrowing the widening knowledge and education gap between rural and urban areas	Developing appropriate education and training tools to strengthen national capacities in rural areas as people – not institutions nor technology – are the driving force behind development

Land	
Policies	Measures
Enhancing sustainable land management practices and protecting land from degradation	Continuing to closely monitor the status of land degradation through the use of appropriate technologies and scientific methods
Preventing land degradation and designating green belts and protected areas for agricultural activities	Integrating the production systems of arid and semi-arid areas with those of marginal agricultural areas
Improving knowledge on natural resources and soils in arid and semi-arid areas and enhancing consumption efficiency	Encouraging cooperation among Arab countries on the exchange of expertise and information on land use-related issues
Enhancing the role of the private sector and civil societies in implementing sustainable development programmes and applying integrated policies to eradicate poverty	Mobilizing and supporting partnerships among national institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations and Arab parliamentarians on issues relating to land use
Promoting scientific research in natural resources protection in order to achieve sustainable development	Using scientific techniques in conducting field surveys, basic research and preparing land-use maps
Supporting existing scientific research institutions to make better use of remote sensing and GIS techniques in establishing accurate and updated databases	Reviewing current demographic policies and their negative impacts on the distribution of agricultural lands, the size of farm holdings, and rural productivity
Ensuring socially just land tenure systems and designing realistic, enforceable land use plans	Developing a general framework and plan for the integrated management of surface and groundwater resources, both at the sectoral and national levels, while ensuring the equitable distribution of water resources
Reforming the property system to eliminate communal ownership of pastures and forests in order to ensure their sustainable development	Raising awareness and investments in water resources conservation
Increasing the use of non-conventional water resources to decrease over-dependency on conventional water resources	

Regional & International Cooperation

By inviting regional and international organizations to support efforts made by countries of the region in the five thematic areas, by encouraging financial and technical cooperation programmes, and by taking into consideration the specificities and comparative advantages of Arab countries with regard to sustainable development, areas of support that can be provided by regional and international institutions and mechanisms include:

- Strengthening and supporting cooperation between United Nations organizations operating in the region and the League of Arab States, in order to achieve the most optimal results in support of CSD-17
- Providing technical assistance to Arab countries in the development and coordination of desertification mitigation plans, including coordinating techniques and methods of developing these plans
- Encouraging the exchange of information on monitoring tools and data on early-warning systems, drought and desertification mitigation practices and adaptation mechanisms, in order to support the decision-making process
- Supporting countries in the provision of financial resources for national and regional programmes in the five thematic areas, especially those related to desertification, data gathering and information exchange, including on indicators to assess the effects of droughts and desertification
- Implementation of regional capacity-building programmes in the five thematic areas
- Reviewing and following up on the development and implementation of sustainable development indicators
- Enhancing the capacity of Arab countries to mitigate the effects of climate change on food security, natural resources and economic growth, through investments in agriculture
- Adopting best practices and experiences from other countries in the five thematic areas and propagating them in the region

Drought	
Policies	Measures
Mitigating and managing drought, organizing and preparing risk and vulnerability profiles and maps, as well as stimulating efforts to combat the negative effects of land degradation, drought and climate change	Conducting risk, vulnerability and impact assessments on the effects of drought and the ecological, agricultural and socio-economic dimensions of this problem at the national and regional level
Enhancing cooperation in planning and implementing drought mitigation programmes at the national and regional level	Establishing and activating drought early-warning systems in order to manage and mitigate any adverse impacts
Supporting and developing human and institutional capabilities at the national level in order to combat drought and the effects of drought in rural areas	Limiting the effects of drought episodes through the optimal use of rainwater harvesting techniques and storage facilities, such as dams and reservoirs
Developing databases on activities related to drought monitoring, assessment, mitigation and management	Developing capabilities, strengthening cooperation and implementing programmes to alleviate the effects of drought, among others
	Conducting regular field monitoring of drought cycles and identifying reliable tools to predict the correct timing of drought episodes

Thank you

For additional information see:

www.escwa.un.org
www.un.org/regionalcommitments



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Desertification	
Policies	Measures
Adopting an integrated approach to combating desertification that would include the physical, biological and socio-economic dimensions of the problem	Developing and implementing national and regional long-term strategies encompassing all the technical aspects pertaining to the conservation of natural resources, as well as the socio-economic impacts of desertification on affected communities
Enhancing the awareness of local populations, especially rural women and youth, on the importance of combating desertification and the sustainable management of natural resources, especially water resources	Incorporating strategies for combating desertification in national and regional sustainable development strategies, in line with the commitments made to implement the Sub-Regional Action Programmes (SRAP) under the UNCCD
Enhancing the national capacities to enable them to undertake scientific research on desertification	Organizing public awareness campaigns on combating desertification and encouraging the establishment of relevant contributing community-based organizations, preparing brochures, and educational material on the subject
Supporting the establishment of joint technology transfer programmes between national institutions, regional organizations and the private sector	Encouraging academic institutions and NGOs to provide assistance to countries of the region in their efforts to combat desertification
Encouraging the establishment of information centres to monitor and combat desertification, as well as training technical staff on issues related to natural resources conservation and sustainable development	Enhancing cooperation between relevant national institutions and between them and civil society organizations in order to establish greater coordination in the regular monitoring of desertification, and formulate plans to combat desertification in the region, in cooperation with specialized regional and international organizations
	Mobilizing public-private partnerships to finance and provide technical support in order to implement plans aimed at combating desertification and rehabilitating degraded lands
	Promoting cooperation & coordination in the establishment of an early-warning system for monitoring desertification at national & regional level
	Encouraging consultations and coordination among Arab countries under the auspices of the League of Arab States on the design and implementation of joint programmes and projects to enhance national action plans and on the management of transboundary water resources