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Climate change and its impacts on water resources in the Arab region

**Building the capacities of member States in climate change negotiations and
preparations for the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations
Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC/COP-21)**

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held three workshops, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, on developing the capacity of Arab negotiators to actively participate in climate change negotiations. It carried out these activities following resolutions adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment at its twenty-fifth session, held in Cairo on 7 November 2013. At this session, participants called on Arab States and regional and international organizations to organize and conduct workshops on climate issues.

The three workshops aimed to enhance the knowledge of Arab negotiators regarding the history of climate change negotiations and recent developments; and to review the outcomes of climate change conferences and their preparatory meetings. At these workshops, participants familiarized themselves with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the thematic working groups tasked with addressing the Convention topics. In addition, the workshops discussed the Arab positions on the measures necessary for climate change adaptation and mitigation and their funding, including technology transfer mechanisms and replenishing the Green Climate Fund. Participants recommended that a competent and unified Arab negotiating team be formed with the necessary support to prepare for, and participate in international climate change negotiations. The three workshops also stressed the need for continuous communication between experienced and less experienced negotiators to enhance knowledge-sharing, coordination and cooperation. Furthermore, they underlined the need for Arab States to develop national capacities and strategic plans to negotiate and tackle climate change issues more effectively, and to fund capacity development plans. ESCWA, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, will organize two more workshops on these issues in 2015, prior to the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015.

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Introduction

1. In collaboration with the League of Arab States, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held three workshops on climate change, based on resolutions adopted by of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) at its twenty-fifth session held in Cairo on 7 November 2013.
2. The three workshops aimed to achieve the following:
 - (a) Raising the awareness of negotiators, especially those with less experience, on the history of climate change negotiations and the latest developments, and reviewing the outcomes of climate change conferences and their preparatory meetings;
 - (b) Exploring the possibility of reaching a common Arab negotiating position, identifying joint challenges, determining ways of optimally benefitting from regional and international experiences, and preparing for the drafting of a new protocol on climate change at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC/COP-21);
 - (c) Promoting the exchange of views on climate change negotiations between competent national bodies in Arab countries, and continuing to develop capacities and build knowledge;
 - (d) Ensuring an ongoing dialogue on climate change between Arab States;
 - (e) Identifying the necessary factors for successful negotiations and proposing measures to guarantee them, and building partnerships with non-Arab actors to achieve common goals;
 - (f) Encouraging Arab countries to develop national capacities and devise strategic plans to build national capacities for tackling climate change issues.

I. TRAINING WORKSHOPS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

3. ESCWA held the first regional training workshop on capacity building for climate change negotiations for Arab countries in Amman, from 22 to 24 October 2013, in collaboration with the League of Arab States. The workshop was attended by 16 experts from nine Arab countries and representatives from the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, the League of Arab States and ESCWA. It aimed to prepare for the nineteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC/COP-19), held in Warsaw, from 11 to 22 November 2013.
4. The second regional training workshop on capacity building for climate change negotiations for Arab countries was held in Amman, from 26 to 28 May 2014, and attended by 40 participants from 13 Arab countries. It aimed to prepare for the fortieth session of the subsidiary bodies of UNFCCC, held in Bonn, from 4 to 15 June 2014; and for the Climate Summit, held in New York, on 23 September 2014.
5. In 2013, ESCWA prepared the Guide on Climate Change Negotiations for Representatives and Negotiators from Arab Countries which contains important scientific information on: climate change and its repercussions for the Arab region; UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, the conferences of the parties and their working groups; and the status of negotiations on key issues such as adaptation, implementation, mitigation, financing and technology transfer. It also sets out guidelines on effective negotiation methods, forming negotiating teams, and building alliances with political groups and their impact on negotiations. Moreover, ESCWA developed training material for workshop participants, available at www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=3541E.

6. ESCWA held a third workshop on the same topic in Kuwait, from 11 to 13 November 2014, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and the Environment Public Authority of Kuwait. It aimed to prepare for the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC/COP-20), held in Lima, from 1 to 12 December 2014. The workshop was attended by 55 participants from 12 Arab countries.

7. Experts and representatives from various backgrounds participated in the three workshops, including representatives from ministries of foreign affairs, the environment, petroleum, electricity, water, agriculture and energy, as well as regional and international organizations. The workshops strove to promote dialogue and coordination and forge common perspectives and positions among national actors on climate change.

8. The workshops were also aimed to prepare for the preliminary meetings of the Arab Group representing Arab countries in climate change negotiations, led by the League of Arab States. Based on the discussions and conclusions of these workshops, the participants contributed to the preparation of an Arab paper summarizing the common Arab position on climate change. The paper was presented to the Arab negotiators at the climate change conference and the preparatory meetings of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies.

II. DISCUSSION TOPICS

9. The workshops addressed the following topics:

(a) UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol and its thematic working groups;

(b) Negotiation topics, the formulation of an Arab position on adaptation, mitigation and finance, replenishing the Green Climate Fund, technology transfer and follow-up on CAMRE resolutions on climate change;

(c) The 2013 Policymakers Summary, issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC);

(d) Preliminary results of the discussions on the repercussions of climate change for the Arab region, based on the regional climate modelling projections until 2100, within the framework of implementing the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR);

(e) Measures taken by ESCWA to support climate change mitigation efforts, including increasing capacity for energy efficiency in various sectors and stepping up efforts to develop new and renewable energy sources;

(f) The status of negotiations on a new climate change protocol and in the discussions of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action;

(g) Building the capacities of Arab countries in the field of mitigating, reducing, measuring, reporting and verifying emissions, and improving access to energy markets, including carbon markets;

(h) Guiding principles for Arab negotiators, and tools for preparing for meetings, making interventions and using key terminology in English which is the official language of the negotiations.

III. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The three workshops concluded with the following recommendations:

(a) To form competent and unified national negotiating teams in all Arab countries, which have the necessary support to prepare for, and participate in, climate change activities, especially international

negotiations, and ensure regular communication between experienced and less experienced negotiators to exchange knowledge and experience and facilitate coordination and collaboration between them;

(b) To develop the capacities of the negotiating teams in English, the official language of international negotiations, especially in key topics and terminology, and prepare a training kit on climate change that includes lessons learned and training materials to build the capacities of less experienced negotiators;

(c) To encourage Arab countries to devise and help fund strategic plans for building national capacities for tackling climate change issues and participating in climate change negotiations;

(d) To organize specialized training workshops on negotiation topics such as financing, technology transfer, the work of IPCC, comparing the results of the regional climate modelling outputs for the Arab region with the IPCC projections, and strengthening negotiation capacities;

(e) To hold virtual workshops and meetings, using blogs, Skype, Webex and other electronic forums to enable as many Arab negotiators as possible to participate in future workshops, and prepare detailed participant lists for all previous workshops to ensure continued communication and the exchange of information and knowledge on climate change negotiation topics;

(f) To promote coordination with other regional organizations concerned with climate change to build the capacities of Arab negotiators and develop negotiator networks to share information and knowledge on climate change;

(g) To draw on the results of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) in the preparation of policy briefs, and enhance the knowledge of negotiators on the results of the regional climate modelling outputs for Arab countries prior to meetings of the conferences of the parties and working group meetings;

(h) To organize a practical training session or a simulation exercise for less experienced negotiators at future workshops to prepare them for negotiations, especially on important issues for the Arab region;

(i) To organize concurrent training sessions and workshops, focusing on major climate change issues, including adaptation, mitigation, financing and carbon market mechanisms;

(j) To strengthen the role of national committees on climate change in Arab countries in building the capacity of Arab negotiators at the national level, and reviewing the outcomes of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report and comparing them to regional climate modelling results for Arab countries;

(k) To encourage other organizations to provide technical and financial support for the upcoming training workshop, and to welcome the proposal of the Regional Office for West Asia of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROWA) to participate in the workshops scheduled for 2015 and provide it with the necessary support;

(l) To prepare detailed training material on giving scientific presentations related to climate change negotiation topics, regularly update them and send them to negotiators who participated in the three workshops via electronic mail;

(m) To organize two additional workshops in 2015, the first in March, and the second before UNFCCC/COP-21, and present their outcomes at UNFCCC/COP-21 side events.

IV. SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

11. Upon the recommendations of participants in the three workshops, ESCWA, in partnership with the League of Arab States, will organize two workshops on capacity building for Arab negotiators in topics being covered in the climate change negotiations. The first workshop will take place prior to the forty-second session of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies, to be convened in Bonn in June 2015; and the second before UNFCCC/COP-21, to be held in Paris, from 30 November to 11 December 2015. Oman and Qatar have offered to host the workshops.

12. It is recommended that the Committee be kept informed about the ESCWA activities on developing the capacity of Arab negotiators to actively participated in climate change negotiations and also about the recommendations of the training workshops.
