

Statement of the West Asia Regional Major Groups and Stakeholders to the second United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP

January 2016

We, the Major Groups and Stakeholders of the West Asia region, in preparation for the for the second United Nations Environment Assembly and the sixteenth Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-16) present the follow statement:

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

On Friday 26 September 2015 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations declared 17 goals, which world leaders adopted for sustainable development to be achieved during the period from 2015 to 2030, and was considered as an ambitious plan that promises a better world within 15 years in different aspects, especially education, poverty eradication, health care and the environment.

We emphasize the importance of these goals in achieving sustainable development, and

Recognizing the importance of the newly agreed 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, we pay tribute to all the global efforts exerted to achieve them, however, from the human development perspective that focuses on the human being as the mainstay of life and the core of development. As such, we:

1. Stress the importance of balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) in order to integrate the principles of justice, participation, transparency, accountability, democracy, respect for human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women and disadvantaged groups, in addition to the Rio principles, namely "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR), and the sovereignty of nations and people to their natural resources.

2. Welcome the recognition that the global Sustainable Development Goals need to take into consideration the specificities, priorities, and capacities of nations, in addition to regional and national policies, with a particular focus on freedom, peace, security, prevention of war and conflict, poverty

eradication, in addition to food, energy, water, transportation, along with changing patterns of consumption and production, reduction in land degradation, drought and desertification, biodiversity conservation, disaster reduction and emergency preparation, being key priorities for achieving sustainable development.

3. Recognize that humans carry the burden and responsibility of preserving the planet, requiring them to realize the extent and scale of their roles and responsibilities towards the planet and the cosmic system, and to believe that the natural resources and wealth did not exist to be depleted and destroyed, but to be protected, preserved and harnessed for the reconstruction of Earth, and the achievement of human development.

4. Emphasize the need to ensure the basic components or enablers to achieve the SDGs, particularly effective governance and implementation mechanisms including both the traditional methods such as funding and the development of effective mechanisms to provide opportunities for knowledge, transfer and indigenization of environment-friendly technology, along with capacity building, building partnerships and support for policy development. This includes the need to ensure that funding is available specifically for developing countries which have limited resources and other priorities which might make them less capable of taking action on the SDGs.

5. Demand the strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development at national and regional levels , through establishing effective and transparent bodies or councils, that are connected and accountable to all actors from the grassroots level to the highest decision making authorities, empowered and mandated to implement and follow up on the Sustainable Development Goals and plans, specifically through:

5.1 The establishment of a Council for Sustainable Development at the regional level that is directly linked to the Economic, Environment and Social Council of the League of Arab States, with mechanisms to ensure the engagement of civil society, major groups and stakeholders at all levels.

5.2 The establishment of a Council for Sustainable Development at national level that is directly linked to the executive authority with mechanisms to ensure the engagement of civil society, major groups and stakeholders at all levels.

The right to information access

6. We urge States to activate Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration to make it a fundamental principle of engagement and partnership among civil society, major groups and stakeholders, through:

6.1 The adoption of the Bali Guidelines prepared by UNEP at the regional and national levels and the development of legislation, policies and appropriate mechanisms to ensure the right of access to information concerning the environment and sustainable development.

6.2 The introduction of environmental law principles and the integration of sustainable development concepts within the education curriculum (schools and universities) and extra-curricular awareness programs.

6.3 The development and establishment of a sustainable development information and data network to support the decision-making and planning processes and initiatives at the government and civil society levels.

6.4 Ensuring the continuous implementation of environmental assessments along with the implementation of environmental impact assessments for all projects and programs, to ensure impacts and risks are identified, addressed and managed.

6.5 Build upon and enhance citizen science engagement in the assessment, monitoring and development of policy, embracing the opportunities of building the capacity of grass roots organizations in support of sustainable development.

Sustainable production and consumption (SCP)

7. We emphasize the need to take advantage of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes(10YFP) on SCP to contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals recognizing that SCP cuts across a number of SDGs as well as SDG11 itself

8. We urge the governments of the region to implement the adopted Arab strategy and execute the policies that have been adopted through the 10YFP.

9. We urge civil society to play a more active role in all stages of programming including planning, discussions, providing input and ideas, advocacy and raising awareness to rationalize consumption and production patterns. This includes a call for commitment to support and facilitation from all actors in order to allow civil society to take on this active role, both in terms of information sharing and in funding.

Participation of civil society organizations and stakeholders

10. We affirm the need to agree and finalize UNEP's Stakeholder Engagement Policy, to update the institutional framework for MGS engagement in UNEP policy and programmes and in achieving the SDGs, and to develop the appropriate guidelines and policies to ensure their effective participation and engagement both at the regional and international levels. We affirm the need to:

10.1 Expand the major groups and stakeholder notion to include representation from other civil society organizations as well as other sectors such as the education sector, the media sector, people with disabilities etc.

10.2 Loosen the accreditation criteria of UNEP and ease the accreditation mechanisms to allow more effective and legitimate representation.

10.3 Ensure the independence of these Major Groups and stakeholders through self-organizing caucuses.

10.4 Adopt the principles related to participation, transparency, accountability, democracy, and good governance within the UNEP Stakeholder Engagement Policy.

10.5 Clarify the role and function of both the newly proposed institutional framework (currently called the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, MGFC) and the regional representation.

10.6 Ensure equal representation between the MGFC and regional representation in discussions.

In regards to all that is related to the West Asia Region

We request the following:

11. Expanding and ensuring the representation of all civil society organizations and stakeholders (Major Groups) by raising awareness and mobilizing all groups through direct and official communication from UNEP's Regional Office for West Asia

12. Replicating the proposed institutional framework at the UNEP headquarters in the region, through the establishment of MGS regional committees at the regional level, composed of the various major groups and stakeholders, self-organized and managed on a rotational basis, and ensures effective follow-up and coordination among them regionally and globally through the regional representation.

13. Strengthening the role of civil society and stakeholders in influencing national, regional and international policies related to the environment through the development of coordination and follow-up mechanisms with all major groups in West Asia, capacity building and establishing an information resource network for knowledge and experience sharing in the region.

14. Strengthening the role of the Regional Office for West Asia by enabling it to function more effectively by providing all the necessary financial resources to do so.

15. We urge to have an advance training for MGS Coordination for each region as well as to have platform for MGS that will enable to each regional representative to put the regional activities and issues and to ease the communication between all Regional Representatives to benefit from each other for the goodness of each region

Regional priorities of West Asia

Given the political situation, state of war, occupation, conflict and insecurity conditions along with the over exploitation of natural resources that some countries in West Asia are experiencing, which reflect

negatively on the three dimensions of sustainable development, as well as on the local communities and the environment resources, as well as the demographic challenge and unemployment,

Climate change and its impact enter the new facts on the concepts of stability, safety and taunting to the highest level of security risks for the region.

The Middle East and North Africa are the region's most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The relationship between the effects of climate security concerns change, be through a series of responses and interactions which can reduce them through risk management and the application of innovative, flexible and scalable solutions, Expectations that demand for water in the Middle East will increase five-fold in 2050 and exceed supply by 50%, countries, particularly those suffering from mismanagement grow where water scarcity and suffer from the pressures of urgency for change, which began to create tensions led to instability and violence.

We request the following:

16. Proposed mitigation measures to respond to the environmental impacts of the conflicts in the region such as Syria (According to the report Lebanon Environmental Assessment of the Syrian Conflict & Priority Interventions September 2014 done by the Lebanese Ministry of Environment .Same impacts for the rest of countries having conflicts .

17. Affirm Prevent the encroachment of vulnerable communities and Informal Tented Settlements on agricultural areas and Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

18. Deployment of low-carbon energy on a large scale in the cities of the world achieves significant economic benefits and opportunities, sustainable Cities is becoming increasingly important with the increasing urbanization and the growing levels of demand on clean and economically viable sources of energy.

19. Ensure that all the world's population to the sources of energy, and to identify new global targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency.

20. Apply the adoption and the adoption of renewable energy sources as it the best option to ensure a sustainable and secure energy in future.

21. Strengthening the efforts to achieve fulfillment of human rights, justice, peace and security in the region and respond to the challenges of countries who suffer from political tensions, occupation, conflicts and insecurity
22. Encouraging a balanced growth in development activities to ensure environmental sustainability and conservation, benefiting from the knowledge sharing and transfer of successful experiences in the region.
23. Devising a comprehensive vision of sustainable development among the Arab countries (including countries in the West Asia region) translated through a unified strategy, which shall be aligned with national plans and initiatives for sustainable development.
24. Sustainable use and management of natural resource at both national and regional levels.
25. Application and implementation of international laws and agreements with respect to infringements of natural resources between countries.
26. Strengthening of regional cooperation in the areas of development whilst encouraging technology transfer in the region through planning and determining the needs to ensure appropriate transfer and nationalization of technology with an emphasis on capacity building and training to ensure the promotion of sustainable development.
27. Encouraging investment in research and development (R&D).
28. Promoting the principles of good governance and anti-corruption in its various forms locally, nationally, regionally and internationally, in addition to ensuring the participation of civil society and stakeholders whilst ensuring transparency and accountability to strengthen their role hence enabling them to perform their role and function as fully capable partners in the development of national plans and policies.