

Statement/recommendations of the West Asia Regional Consultation Meeting of Major Groups and Stakeholders in preparation for the first United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the fifteenth Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-15)

26 – 27 November 2013 (Amman, Jordan)

We, the participants at the Major Groups and Stakeholders Regional Consultation Meeting for West Asia, in preparation towards the first United Nations Environment Assembly of the UNEP and the fifteenth Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-15), held back-to-back with the Arab Water Dialogue, and at which 28 representatives of Major Groups were present on 26-27 of November 2013 in Amman, Jordan, *agreed* on the following:

Sustainable Development Goals- SDGs

Recognizing the importance of the efforts made by various bodies working on developing the Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015 Development Agenda, 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 Agenda 21 and Rio principles, namely "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR), and the sovereignty of nations and people over their natural resources.
2. *Stipulate* the need for the global Sustainable Development Goals 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. *Request* that Sustainable Development Goals are clear, concise, scientific and limited in number, implementable with clear targets and measurable indicators that allow for monitoring and evaluating the progress toward sustainability
4. *Emphasize* the need to ensure the basic components or enablers to achieve these goals, 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.

5. *Demand* the strengthening of institutional framework for sustainable development at national and regional levels in a way that is in-line with the principles of Rio+20, through establishing effective and transparent bodies or councils, that are connected and accountable 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 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 programmes.

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 programmes, to ensure impacts and risks are identified, addressed and managed.

6.5 The need to integrate the environmental dimension in national policies, strategies and programmes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable production and consumption

7. We *emphasize* the need to take advantage of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production to contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
8. We *urge* the governments of the region to implement the adopted Arab strategy and execute the policies that have been adopted through the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production.
9. We *urge* civil society to play a more active role in advocacy and raising awareness to rationalize consumption and production patterns.

Participation of civil society organizations and stakeholders

10. We *affirm* the need to update the institutional framework for civil society, major groups and stakeholders engagement in UNEP policy and programs and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, 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 newly proposed institutional framework (currently under preparation).
 - 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 major groups and regional representation.

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 ensuring 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.

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, we request the following:

15. Strengthening the efforts to achieve peace and security in the region and respond to the challenges of countries who suffer from political tensions, occupation, conflicts and insecurity
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. Sustainable use and management of natural resources at both national and regional levels.

19. Application and implementation of international laws and agreements with respect to infringements of natural resources between countries.
20. 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.
21. Encouraging investment in research and development (R&D).
22. 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.