

**REPORT****EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON  
REVERSING LAND DEGRADATION: ISSUES AND OPTIONS  
BEIRUT, 25-27 JULY 2005****Summary**

The Expert Group Meeting on Reversing Land Degradation: Issues and Options was held in Beirut from 25 to 27 July 2005. The major aim of the meeting was to review and propose appropriate measures to assist countries of the Region to assess, control and reverse land degradation. The meeting was attended by 34 national, regional and international experts, 7 of which were women.

ESCWA prepared and presented three papers on “Assessing land degradation in the ESCWA Region: a methodological framework”, “Review and analysis of best practices and approaches in reversing land degradation in the ESCWA region” and “The economics of land degradation in the ESCWA region,” and these were complemented by papers and presentations from attending national and international experts. The discussions touched on several issues, among which were the need to share information and document experiences, the impact of the rapid urbanization rate in the region, the effect of inappropriate and/or inconsistent policies and strategies being applied, the need to assess land suitability and to link it to land planning and sectoral development plans and the rehabilitation of abandoned land.

The experts made a set of recommendations to both member countries and to ESCWA and partner institutions. Recommendations to member countries stressed on the need to adopt the land degradation assessment methodological framework proposed by ESCWA, to establish a land degradation depository system, to conduct appropriate economic analyses, and to re-assess existing policies and strategies on land degradation. Recommendations to ESCWA and partner institutions stressed on the need to support member countries to adopt the land degradation assessment methodological framework proposed, to support countries to assess their national capabilities in relation to land degradation, to harmonize programs, to develop a pilot project on land degradation assessment and to formalize capacity building programs.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Land degradation is a pervasive problem, which needs immediate attention, as land is a finite resource. The need to better manage land resources is even more important for member countries of the ESCWA region, as those countries are located for most part in hyper-arid, arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones, which are also known as drylands. The region is highly prone to land degradation and this is a concern as land degradation in dryland areas is referred to as desertification. The driving forces of land degradation in the region include the harsh climatic conditions, the rapidly growing population, the rapid pace of urbanization, the inadequacy of agricultural practices, the depletion of groundwater resources and the sustained destruction of the vegetative cover. The above are leading to soil erosion, salinization and solidification, decreased land productivity and reduced vegetative cover to name a few.

2. Despite the above, countries of the region have yet to view the quality of the land as a major policy objective on its own. Instead, it is being viewed as an input into achieving other policy objectives such as high economic growth, enhanced rural development, greater agricultural productivity or achieving food self-sufficiency, and its impact is only recognized when it hampers the achievement of those objectives. There is a need to draw the attention of policy-makers on the issue of land degradation by showing them the extent of the problem and its impact so that they could better realize the threat of land degradation. Efforts would also be exerted to highlight what has been achieved and what could be done to counteract the negative impacts of land degradation.

3. As part of its regular work programme, ESCWA has convened this expert consultation in the hope that innovative ways to effectively address the problem of land degradation in the region could be found. The objectives of the Expert Group Meeting were to review and propose appropriate measures to reverse land degradation; to identify ways of harmonizing national and regional efforts and linking them to global initiatives so as to ensure maximum impact; to adopt relevant and practical action-oriented recommendations to combat land degradation; and to encourage member states to adopt a better and unified methodological framework to assess land degradation and to evaluate the effectiveness of measures for controlling and reversing land degradation.

## I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. CONCLUSIONS

4. Thirty four experts from ESCWA member countries, regional and international institutions and organizations as well as Lebanese institutions and organizations attended the Expert Group Meeting and reached the following conclusion:

5. Land degradation is a cause of concern in the region. There is a need to fully investigate the problem in order to determine the most appropriate course of action to be taken. To this end, a methodological framework to assess land degradation was developed and presented by ESCWA and was commended as an important stepping-stone in the assessment of land degradation in the region.

6. Conducting appropriate economic analyses is important as natural resources are limited and as the process of reversing land degradation is costly for both governments and stakeholders. Well-designed economic analyses should allow for a better allocation and utilization of resources and, particularly, financial resources.

7. Rapid urbanization and urban sprawl are issues of concern in the region and they need to be addressed urgently as agricultural land is being lost at an alarming rate to urban development. The issue of profitability of agricultural-related activities should be addressed together with that of land tenure, as the continued fragmentation of the land is limiting its profitable use, particularly in agriculture.

8. The sharing of information and experiences should be promoted at both national and regional levels. This could start by building national databases, which could then be linked into a regional network. Regional organizations should assist countries in building or developing such a regional land degradation information system, which could also serve as a depository of researches and successful and practical experiences.

9. Other issues of importance touched upon include the need to assess land suitability and to link it to land planning and sectoral development plans, the need to address the prevailing inappropriate and/or inconsistent policies and strategies and the need to rehabilitate abandoned land.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The Expert Group Meeting made a set of recommendations, which targeted both member countries and ESCWA and its partner institutions.

11. Recommended actions for member countries:

- a) Request member countries to adopt a harmonized methodological framework to assess, prevent and reverse land degradation with a view to promote regional cooperation and collaboration and to share experiences in their quest to achieve sustainable land resources and ecosystem management;
- b) Request member countries to critically look into the land degradation assessment methodological framework that has been proposed and to adopt and adapt it to their particular circumstances, enhance, and use it as a basis for a preliminary assessment of land degradation;
- c) Request member countries to look into how to begin or continue the development of a national depository system on land degradation issues and experiences and use it as a basis for a regional information system on land degradation. The establishment of the national depository system could be preceded by an inventory of the various actors and stakeholders involved, their potential contribution in building the database, and their experiences, approaches, methods and tools used, with an emphasis on success stories in preventing and/or reversing land degradation;
- d) Request member countries to identify focal institutions that could take the lead in the development of a national depository system on land degradation and to provide them with the necessary human, technical and financial resources. Countries may identify their needs on this and other issues and request regional and international organizations for support;
- e) Request member countries to conduct appropriate economic analyses of land degradation that would take into consideration social and environmental costs and benefits and to assess the cost-effectiveness of the various policies so as to more efficiently allocate and use the limited resources;
- f) Request member countries to critically re-assess the relevance of existing legislations and policies pertaining to land degradation and land use planning and if necessary, amend them so that they could be enforced. It is recommended to devote a special attention to legislations and policies on land use change that do not promote the prevention and control of urban sprawl, as it occurs at the expense of agricultural lands, and to those policies and legislations that do not promote community involvement and gender mainstreaming in land resources management, and that do not allow for the introduction of a new land tenure system that prevents the unsustainable fragmentation of the land.

12. Recommended actions for ESCWA and partner organizations and institutions:

- a) Request ESCWA and/or other international organizations to look into how to conduct one or two additional case-studies using the land degradation assessment methodological framework that has been developed in order to further assess its applicability and usability at country level, and to arrange for the development and testing of the decision support tools, which would facilitate the automation and practical application of the methodological framework;
- b) Request ESCWA and/or other international organizations to provide the required technical assistance and advisory services as requested by member countries wishing to adopt and adapt the proposed methodological framework to assess land degradation, to conduct appropriate economic analysis with approaches fit to the circumstances and values of the countries, and/or to reform their existing legislation and policies with regards to land degradation and land use planning;
- c) Assist Member Countries to conduct an inventory of national capabilities, including approaches, experiences, and datasets, with a view to build national and regional land degradation databases and information systems and encourage the sharing of data, information and experiences at national, regional and international levels with an emphasis on best approaches, methods, tools and land management practices that are applied elsewhere;
- d) Request the organization of a meeting for national and regional experts to look into the issue of harmonization of programs on land degradation at national and regional levels;
- e) Support the development of an appropriate land degradation assessment and prevention pilot project under the umbrella of the UNCCD-SRAP for West Asia, and provide technical advice, assistance and capacity building as necessary for an efficient implementation of land degradation control program, including the formulation of projects on reversing land degradation and identification of potential donors to support the implementation of such projects;
- f) Request ESCWA, UN agencies, and research institutions with stakes and/or interests in the region to coordinate and commission or undertake the development of training manuals, courses and academic programming or other initiatives aimed at formalizing the support for capacity building on issues of land degradation within the context of land use planning, integrated natural resources planning and sustainable resource management in the region, and within the framework of integrated sustainable development;
- g) Request ESCWA and its partner agencies to monitor progress on the recommendations made above, and to stock-take progress achieved on the prevention and reversal of land and resource degradation in the region.

## **II. MAIN TOPICS OF PAPERS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **A. LAND DEGRADATION OVERVIEW, ASSESSMENT AND ECONOMIC ISSUES**

13. This session provided an overview and a regional perspective on land degradation and discussed the issues of land degradation assessment, prevention, best practices and economics.

14. An ESCWA presentation provided an overview of the concepts of sustainable agriculture, rural development and sustainable livelihoods and linked them to the issue of land degradation. The presentation also highlighted the experience of ESCWA in addressing the issue of land degradation.

15. An FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) paper provided a perspective on land degradation in the Near East region and highlighted the factors behind it. A few country reviews were provided together with a review of global initiatives such as the Land Degradation Assessment in Dryland Areas (LADA).

16. An ESCWA paper on “Assessing land degradation in the ESCWA region: a methodological framework” introduced a methodological framework to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impact of land degradation, which, in twelve core set of activities, allows for the mapping and monitoring of land degradation over time. The paper provided also the results of the application of the framework to the Hermel region in Lebanon. It was found intensely to severely degraded.

17. The National Council for Scientific Research (Lebanon) paper presented the results of a land degradation assessment in a coastal area characterized by urban encroachment and deteriorating water quality. The paper highlighted the process of mapping soil erosion and identified a few remedial measures.

18. An ESCWA paper on “Review and analysis of best practices and approaches in reversing land degradation in the ESCWA region” discussed various issues related to land degradation and provided examples of prevention measures and success stories on reversing land degradation in the region.

19. Another ESCWA paper on “The Economics of land degradation in the ESCWA region” discussed the issues of cost of land degradation, cost-benefit analysis for rehabilitating degraded terraces in Lebanon and the use of public interventions and incentives as instruments to combat land degradation.

20. In the ensuing discussions, the land degradation assessment methodological framework presented was commended as a major stepping-stone in the assessment of land degradation in the region. However, it was noted that the framework should be simplified and put into a language that could be easily understood by policy- and decision-makers. It was also suggested to look into how to translate the results of the framework into economic or monetary terms, as these are more appealing to policy- and decision-makers.

21. It was also noted that the conduct of economic analyses is important as resources are limited and as reversing land degradation is costly for both governments and farmers. These economic analyses would aim at enhancing the allocation and utilization of resources, particularly financial ones, and would be expanded in order to incorporate social and environmental costs and benefits and feasibility studies as these could lead to targeted advices to both farmers and decision-makers. These analyses should be conducted within a comprehensive and integrated resource planning framework, meaning that they would include land suitability assessments, and the identification or determination of the comparative advantage of each area, country or region, based on the natural vocation of the land and the best allocation of resources to ensure sustainability.

## B. ASSESSMENT METHODS AND EXPERIENCES AT REGIONAL AND COUNTRY LEVELS

22. The second session was devoted to a review of experiences in combating land degradation at regional and country levels.

23. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) presentation gave an overview of the challenges and progress made in combating land degradation in Western Asia. It also reviewed the global response to the problem and the projects being implemented and in the pipeline.

24. The United Nations University – International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) presentation reviewed the challenges facing dryland ecosystems and presented the organization’s accumulated experience in the management of water resources and marginal drylands.

25. In the Bahrain presentation, it was noted that land degradation is a result of the over-exploitation of groundwater resources and that this is resulting in seawater intrusion and the deterioration of springs, which are vital for agriculture. It was also noted that this land degradation has a major socio-economic impact.
26. The Jordan presentation overviewed the major types and causes of land degradation together with the constraints and challenges to reverse it. It also presented a number of projects currently being implemented, which include the Zarqa River basin project as well as reforestation projects.
27. The Makhzoumi Foundation (Lebanon) presentation reviewed the achievements of the organization in rehabilitating degraded lands using agro-forestry. It underscored that agro-forestry is used to maximize land use, to conserve and to increase biodiversity and to condition the soil.
28. The Lebanon presentation reviewed the situation and the causes of land degradation and presented the major achievements in combating land degradation. These include the implementation of a National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and projects promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.
29. The Oman presentation discussed the causes of land degradation and some of the solutions adopted to overcome the problem. It was noted that major efforts are being exerted to better manage the environment, the overall aim being the sustainable and social development of the country.
30. In the Kuwait presentation it was noted that land degradation is caused by population and rapid urbanization and that it consists of soil erosion and salinization and the degradation of pasturelands. Efforts are being exerted towards reforestation, reclamation of desert land and establishment of protected areas.
31. The Palestine presentation provided an overview of the causes and indicators of land degradation and noted that efforts are being geared towards land reclamation, reforestation, enhancement of the biological diversity and water harvesting but also towards the alleviation of rural poverty.
32. In the Qatar presentation it was noted that land degradation manifests itself through pastureland degradation, soil salinization and solidification, land erosion, lowering of the water table and sand dunes encroachment. It also noted that a land degradation assessment was conducted using the LADA approach.
33. The Saudi Arabia presentation showed that land degradation is caused by the climate and human activities including urbanization. It noted that efforts to combat desertification include the implementation of a National Plan to Combat Desertification and reforestation and land reclamation projects.
34. In the Syria presentation it was noted that land degradation in the Badia is caused by overgrazing, deforestation, fires and water resources depletion and that this is leading to soil salinization, decreased land productivity and loss of forests cover. It also noted that about 1,800 hectares of land have been rehabilitated.
35. The United Arab Emirates presentation highlighted the efforts of the country in combating desertification, which include reforestation, land reclamation and sand dunes stabilization. Other activities are the protection of groundwater resources, the reuse of wastewater and the rationalization of water use.
36. The Green Plan (Lebanon) presentation gave an overview of the activities of the organization in the area of land reclamation, terracing, irrigation and construction of water reservoirs. A brief review of the work completed for the period 2000-2004 was also provided.
37. The Women's Association of Deir El Ahmar (Lebanon) presentation reviewed its activities in support of rural women and noted that programs to protect the environment include tree planting, solid waste treatment, awareness-raising campaigns and promotion of eco-tourism and sustainable rural development.

38. The Ministry of Energy and Water (Lebanon) presentation gave an overview of the activities implemented in relation to combating land degradation. These include the protection of riverbanks and the construction of dams and reservoirs to store water for irrigation and to regulate water supply.

39. An ESCWA presentation gave an overview of the results of a project being implemented in Southern Lebanon to promote honey and zaatar production. Both are profitable activities, which have the potential to reduce land degradation caused by water erosion, land abandonment and water scarcity.

40. In the discussions, a number of subjects and issues were touched upon. For example, it was noted that for most projects the tendency is to spend most resources on project study and implementation while little is allocated to the evaluation and dissemination of results. It was noted that there is a need to make a follow-up on projects that were implemented by conducting impact assessment studies so as to identify best practices.

41. The issue of work duplication within the United Nations was also raised, as participants felt there could be a scattering of efforts. It was noted that the issue of duplication within the UN system is a recurrent topic in meetings but also that there is a need to streamline the work of the various UN entities. Greater efforts should be exerted to enhance cooperation, collaboration and coordination within the UN system. However, it was also stressed that sometimes duplication is a good thing as a same problem could be studied from different angles thereby increasing the likelihood of identifying new and innovative solutions. In any case, it was felt that there is a need to build a database containing information on all projects being or that have been implemented in the region. The database would serve as an information resource and a guide to national and regional endeavours.

42. The need to promote the sharing of information and innovative experiences, including the various policies and legislations being applied in the region was also brought forward. It was suggested that regional organizations should assist countries of the region in building a regional land degradation information system that would contain research results and successful and practical experiences. To this end, countries should start stocktaking the required information and use it as a stepping-stone for a national depository system. It was noted that this could also be a way to enhance the sharing of information between the various institutions and organizations involved at country level.

43. The discussions touched also on the issues of rapid urbanization and urban sprawl, which are a cause of concern in the region. Countries need to urgently address these issues since agricultural land is being lost at an alarming rate due to the prevailing market forces, which favour urban development at the expense of agriculture production. There is a need to enact policies that would improve either the value of the land used in agriculture or the profitability of agricultural-related activities. The issue of land tenure should also be addressed, as the fragmentation of the land is limiting its sustainable and profitable use in agriculture.

44. It was also noted that the mismanagement of land resources is usually a result of inappropriate and/or inconsistent policies and strategies, such as, for example, promoting cereal production in areas with precipitation of 160 mm or less, aiming at achieving food self-sufficiency as opposed to food security or promoting the production of water-intensive crops in water-deficit and/or drought prone areas. These inconsistencies should be discouraged as they are leading to the use of techniques or technologies that have a negative impact on the environment, such as the use of saline water for irrigation or the exploitation of groundwater resources at rates far exceeding their recharge. Policies and strategies, both at macro- and micro-level, should be critically re-assessed to ensure that they support the conservation of land resources. In this era of globalisation, and especially since the enactment of the free trade area of the Arab world, countries of the region should start specializing in those commodities in which they have a comparative advantage in order to more efficiently use their limited resources.

45. The need to enhance the role and work of the various institutions involved in land degradation and to inject a human element so that those institutions could be more people-centred was also discussed. It was noted that new mechanisms or institutional frameworks that could allow a better discussion and definition of

the role of all those involved in land degradation are needed. The role of local communities in combating land degradation should be clearly defined together with that of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as combating land degradation is not only the duty of public institutions. Also, the role of the various public institutions should be clearly spelled out in order to avoid overlapping, as, for example, several ministries could deal with a same issue (water being the most vivid example), thereby leading to contradictions. There is also a need to enhance capacity building, especially at the field level, and to better involve local experts and stakeholders so that projects would be designed and implemented by the people and for the people in order to ensure maximum impact.

46. Using proper techniques and technologies is a must, especially those that are already known by stakeholders. Research should be used to improve these techniques and technologies and to encourage the transfer of new and innovative ones while discouraging the use of improper ones. The development of a compendium of existing techniques and technologies, including local knowledge, should also be encouraged as a way to guide stakeholders.

47. Another point touched upon is the need to take a closer look at the issue of land suitability since each piece of land has its own vocation and going against it could increase the likelihood of land degradation. There is also a need to link together the issues of land suitability, land planning and sectoral development plans and to link these to the issue of land degradation so that they could form the basis of good land husbandry. This is especially true, as land planning is crucially needed in the region because the high urbanization is encroaching more and more on the limited agricultural land.

48. The need to look into how to rehabilitate abandoned land including the ancient terraces of Lebanon and Yemen was also discussed. It was noted that farmers in some areas are experimenting with their own techniques, such as the colonization of upland terraces using fertile soils from the valleys below (e.g. southern part of Lebanon) or the re-colonization of old olive plantations with forests in the Mount Lebanon area. Some of these ad-hoc approaches are good and should be encouraged but some others could prove disastrous for the land and need to be urgently discouraged.

49. It was noted that the presentations did not allow a distinction between the achievements of programmes or countries with sufficient financial means from those with less means. The availability of adequate funding did not seem to be a major factor of success and this should be looked upon closely. Also, it was noted that some countries have accumulated experiences in specific areas that other countries could benefit from. This includes for example the fact that some countries are able to take advantage of the free technical expertise available within the UN system better than others. All these cases have to be studied and documented so that countries could learn from them.

50. It was also noted that poverty is a cause of land degradation and as such, alternative ways to combat desertification should include finding better opportunities for farmers. This could include the identification of new off- and on-farm sources of income, the promotion of high-value crops and others. Capacity building, training and networking should also be reinforced. However, it was noted that there is no need to create any new networks or to identify new focal points, as they already exist. It would be advisable instead to build on existing ones.

### **III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

51. The conclusion and recommendations were presented and reviewed and comments were provided both in oral and written format. Participants were in agreement with the conclusion and recommendations provided that the suggested comments and suggestions are taken into account.

## **IV. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

### **A. ATTENDANCE**

52. Present at the Expert Group Meeting were thirty-four experts from ten ESCWA member countries (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria and United Arab Emirates), international organizations (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – Regional Office for the Near East, United Nations Environment Programme – Regional Office for Western Asia and United Nations University – International Network on Water, Environment and Health), academia (Trent University, Canada and University of Alexandria, Egypt), and various Lebanese institutions and organizations and individual experts (Ministry of Energy and Water, National Council for Scientific Research/National Centre for Remote Sensing (CNRS/NCRS), Green Plan, Makhzoumi Foundation, National Environment Action Plan, Women’s Association of Deir Al-Ahmar, Jihad Al-Binah Development Association and Polytech Agro-Environment) in addition to experts from ESCWA (the list of participants is attached as Annex I). Most participants had a background in land resources management (including land degradation and desertification), agriculture and/or rural development.

### **B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

53. The Expert Group Meeting was held from 25 to 27 July 2005 at the United Nations House in Beirut (Lebanon) and was formally opened by the Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, the Deputy Executive Secretary and the Chief of the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD) of ESCWA. In her introductory remarks, Ms. Anhar Hegazi, Chief, SDPD/ESCWA stressed on the need to offset the negative effects of land degradation on agricultural productivity and rural development. Ms. Mariam Al-Awadhi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA, noted that land degradation is affecting the livelihood of many rural communities of the region and that there is a need to find appropriate ways to mitigate it starting from an assessment of its extent and impact. His Excellency, Mr. Talal Al-Sahili, Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, highlighted the major causes of land degradation in Lebanon, and provided an overview of some of the major steps that are being taken to combat it.

54. The two main sessions of the meeting were devoted to the issues of land degradation overview, assessment and economics and assessment methods and experiences at regional and country levels and these were followed by a discussion of the conclusion and recommendations.

## **V. MEETING EVALUATION**

55. An evaluation questionnaire was distributed in order to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Expert Group Meeting. The feedback received was overall positive as the majority of participants noted that the meeting achieved its objectives; that it has been up to their expectation; and that the conclusions and recommendations were significant even if some of them felt that they could be difficult to implement due to financial, administrative, technical and political constraints.

56. As a follow up to the meeting, and particularly to the presentation of the land degradation assessment framework, which put a special emphasis on the Hermel region in Lebanon, the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon graciously offered to the ESCWA consultant who developed the framework and an ESCWA staff member, the opportunity to undertake a field survey in the above-mentioned area so as to confirm or validate the results of the assessment at the field level. Following the findings of the field visit, the level of accuracy of the framework to predict land degradation type, intensity and extent was estimated at 85 to 90% across the different land degradation type for the land systems that had been identified. Thus, the land degradation assessment framework developed and presented by ESCWA is a good and reliable land degradation assessment tool.

## ANNEX I

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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## ANNEX II

### PROGRAMME OF WORK

#### MONDAY, 25 JULY 2005

09:00 – 10:00 - Registration

#### **Opening Session**

10:00 – 11:00 - Introductory and opening speeches by:  
• Ms. A. Hegazi, Chief SDPD  
• Ms M. Al-Awadhi, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCWA  
• His Excellency, Mr. Talal Al-Sahili, Minister of Agriculture, Lebanon  
- Coffee Break

#### **Session I: Land Degradation Overview, Assessment and Economic Issues**

**Chair: Mr. Adel Cortas**

**Co-Chair: Mr. Ahmed Al-Jowder, Bahrain**

|               |   |                                  |
|---------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 11:00 – 11:15 | - Reversing land degradation: an overview   | M.E. Osman, ESCWA                |
| 11:15 – 11:30 | - Land degradation in the Near East:<br>A regional perspective  | G. Hamdallah, FAO/RNE            |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | - Assessing land degradation in the ESCWA region:<br>A methodological framework                             | R. Ponce, ESCWA<br>Consultant    |
| 12:00 – 12:15 | - Diagnostic, analysis and mitigation of coastal land<br>degradation in Lebanon                             | T. Darwish,<br>CNRS/NCRS/Lebanon |
| 12:15 – 13:00 | - General Discussion  |                                  |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | - Lunch break   |                                  |
| 14:00 – 14:15 | - Review and analysis of best practices and approaches<br>in reversing land degradation in the ESCWA region | B. Salem, ESCWA<br>Consultant    |
| 14:15 – 14:30 | - The economics of land degradation in the<br>ESCWA region  | F. Byiringiro, ESCWA             |
| 14:30 – 15:30 | - General Discussion  |                                  |

#### TUESDAY, 26 JULY 2005

#### **Session II: Assessment Methods and Experiences at Regional and Country Levels**

**Chair: Mr. Ghassan Hamdallah, FAO/RNE**

**Co-Chair: Mr. Mohammad E. Osman, ESCWA**

|               |   |                                     |
|---------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 09:00 – 09:15 | - Combating land degradation in West Asia:<br>overview, progress and challenges | A.A. Ghosn,<br>UNEP/ROWA            |
| 09:15 – 09:30 | - Sustainable management of marginal Drylands,<br>Experience of the UNU-INWEH   | W. Saleh, UNU/INWEH                 |
| 09:30 – 09:45 | - Country paper – Bahrain   | N.S. Al-Hamdan                      |
| 09:45 – 10:00 | - Country paper – Jordan  | W.M. Al-Sartawy                     |
| 10:00 – 11:00 | - General Discussion  |                                     |
| 11:00 – 11:15 | - Coffee Break  |                                     |
| 10:15 – 10:45 | - Agro-forestry development project of degraded<br>lands in Lebanon             | M. Hammady, Makhzoumi<br>Foundation |

#### **Session II: Assessment Methods and Experiences at Regional and Country Levels (Cont'd)**

**Chair: Mr. Ahmad Ghosn, UNEP/ROWA**

**Co-Chair: Mr. Mohammad E. Osman, ESCWA**

|               |                                |                   |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 11:45 – 12:00 | - Country paper – Lebanon      | H. Nasrallah      |
| 12:00 – 12:15 | - Country paper – Oman         | S. Al-Habsi       |
| 12:15 – 12:30 | - Country paper – Kuwait       | A.A.K. Al-Shamali |
| 12:30 – 12:45 | - Country paper – Palestine    | Z. Salawdeh       |
| 12:45 – 13:15 | - General Discussion           |                   |
| 13:15 – 13:30 | - Coffee Break                 |                   |
| 13:30 – 13:45 | - Country paper – Qatar        | G. Al-Ghanim      |
| 13:45 – 14:00 | - Country paper – Syria        | M.H. Naji         |
| 14:00 – 14:15 | - Country paper – Saudi Arabia | N. Al-Marri       |
| 14:15 – 14:30 | - Country paper – UAE          | S.A. Al-Tamimi    |
| 14:30 – 15:00 | - General Discussion           |                   |

### **WEDNESDAY, 27 JULY 2005**

#### **Session II: Assessment Methods and Experiences at Regional and Country Levels (Cont'd)**

**Chair: Mr. Walid Saleh, UNU**

**Co-Chair: Mr. Ghanim Al-Ghanim, Qatar**

|               |   |                              |
|---------------|---|------------------------------|
| 10:00 – 10:15 | - Green Plan Paper  | Raymond El-Khoury            |
| 10:15 – 10:30 | - Lebanese Women's Association Deir El-Ahmar paper                    | Dunia Al-Khoury              |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | - Paper by the Ministry of Energy and Water                           | F. Comair/W.Kanj,<br>Lebanon |
| 10:45 – 11:00 | - Paper on crop choice to combat land degradation<br>in South Lebanon | C. Chouchani, ESCWA          |
| 11:00- 11:15  | - Coffee Break  |                              |
| 11:15 – 12:15 | - General discussion  |                              |

#### **Session IV: Conclusions, Recommendations and the Way Forward**

**Chair: Mr. Mohammad E. Osman, ESCWA**

**Co-Chair: Mr. Hussein Nasrallah, Lebanon**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 12:15 – 12:45 | - Conclusions, Recommendations and the Way Forward |
| 12:45 – 13:45 | - Closing Session                                  |
|               | - Evaluation                                       |
|               | - Overall remarks                                  |