
**Report on Progress to the 14th Meeting of the
Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) of the Arab States**

**11-12 November 2010
Beirut**

Climate Change Thematic Working Group

(Draft 10 November 2010)

Working Group Members

Agency
UNEP (Convener)
ESCWA
UNDP
UNESCO
WHO (new member)
UN-ISDR
FAO (new member)
UN-Habitat (suggested)
UNIDO (new member)
WFP (suggested)
World Bank (suggested)
UNU (new member)
WMO (suggested)
League of Arab States (Observer)

Key Summary of Achievements/Developments in 2010

The original Workplan endorsed by the TWG on 26 October 2008 has been the basis for the Group work in 2009 and 2010. The work plan identified six priority areas of joint activities (see Annex B). The most successful so far is the regular and consistent work on the assessment of water vulnerability to climate change in the Arab region spearheaded by ESCWA and UNEP in 2009 and largely by ESCWA in 2010. The first Expert Group Meeting on Assessing Water Resources Vulnerability to Climate Change was convened in Beirut 26-28 October with the participation of six UN agencies (ESCWA, UNEP, UNDP, WMO, UN-ISDR, FAO) in addition to experts from Arab countries and Arab regional organizations. The EGM agreed that a vulnerability assessment of the impact of climate change on water resources in the Arab region would be jointly conducted by United Nations organizations and League of Arab States specialized agencies in consultation with Arab member States. The vulnerability assessment would address the impact of climate change on freshwater resources, as well as the associated socio-economic and environmental implications for the region. A work plan was developed structuring the work into four main pillars, namely, a 1) baseline review, 2) impact analysis and vulnerability assessment, 3) awareness building and information dissemination, and 4) capacity building and institutional development. As a result, ESCWA formulated a series of project concepts to implement these recommendations and proceeded with resource mobilisation. One of these concepts (jointly with UNEP) was submitted to the UN Development Account for funding. More information about the meeting can be found at the following link

<http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/teams.asp?teams=Water%20Resources&division=SDPD>

A second meeting of the EGM is scheduled to be held in Beirut, 8-10 November 2010. The EGM has attracted increasing interest from UN and other agencies and we expect an expanded working that includes also international climate centers such as the Hadley Centre and the Swedish Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology. The WMO has engaged substantially in the aspects of regional climate modeling and climate information. There is a good prospect of conducting a scientifically sound assessment and parallel capacity building activities and networking.

Despite the fact that there have been a number of activities that had been implemented in the Arab Region in 2010 (except the 2nd RCM) with the participation of more than one UN agency, unfortunately there haven't been TWG joint activities deliberately planned to be within the framework of the RCM.

The most notable development in 2010 relevant to the CC TWG scope of work is the active engagement of the World Bank and UNDP in climate change programming in the Arab region. The World Bank, presumably through the MENA Climate Change Technical Assistance Programme conducted a consultation meeting under the auspices of LAS in Cairo in September 2010 and has concluded several missions to countries in the region. The World Bank intends to produce a report on climate change in the Arab region in collaboration with regional centres. No further details available at this stage.

The second most notable initiative is the UNDP Arab Climate Resilience Initiative. Three regional consultations were concluded on 1) water, drought and population movement, 2) Seal Level Rise in Cairo, and 3) Energy Efficiency in Bahrain. These consultations will be concluded with a high-level meeting in Morocco 3-5 November 2010.

The R/UNDG Cluster on the Nexus between Food Security and Climate Change had also advanced its work on the subject by discussing TOR within the context of the Peer Support Group (PSG), preparing a background paper and conducting a technical meeting for the UN agencies in Cairo October 2010. UNEP/ROWA participated in the meeting and highlighted the work of the TWG and gained better understanding of the role of the R/UNDG Cluster. It should be noted that the role of Cluster is considered complimentary to the work of the TWG. The two groups are operating on a different level of support and distinct functions. While the TWG is more of a coordination and joint programming forum, the R/UNDG is more of providing technical and operational advisory support to the UN Country Teams. Further, the R/UNDG Cluster focuses on “the Nexus” between Food Security and Climate Change while the TWG is solely on Climate Change issues which may have the dimension of food security integrated.

One of the emerging priority issues in the Arab region is the protection of health from the impacts of climate change including health aspects of water resources. The WHO has been mandated to assist countries in the Region in development health and climate change national frameworks. The WHO is willing to actively participate in the TWG offering joint activities on health and climate impacts assessment, adaptation strategies in the health sector and provision of capacity building support at the national and regional levels.

Key Challenges Affecting Implementation

- 1. In the absence of a broader framework for programming climate change activities in the Arab region, it is difficult to ensure commitment of all agencies to the TWG agreed work plan.**
- 2. Because of time and funding availability, it has been difficult to arrange face-to-face meeting in 2009 and early in 2010. A second meeting of the TWG took place on the 10th November 2010**
- 3. Lack of common information sharing platform has limited exchange of information about activities of each agency in the region. Although the UN-ISDR offered to host such information platform, there has been limited progress on creating a space on the preventionweb of the UN-ISDR.**
- 4. Need to re-affirm the role of the TWG within the framework of CEB to provide stronger incentive to drive the process.**
- 5. Financial resources to support agency activities at the regional levels are limited and hence resources available for joint programming of larger scale activities at the regional level**
- 6. Agencies develop and implement their regional initiatives and programmes without strong coordination elements and usually outside the TWG forum.**
- 7. Notable turnover of focal points in UN agencies affects keeping the institutional memory and having consistent and impact-oriented joint actions.**
- 8. No obvious or documented demand from countries of the region for such a coordination mechanism, except expressions from the RCM and the League of Arab States (LAS). There**

were considerable hopes in 2008 that the Arab Framework of Action on Climate Change developed by the League of Arab States (LAS) could be the guiding document/principles for having joint UN programme in the Arab region. However, the AFACC ran into longer than anticipated consultation process to the extent that we do not know for how long it will continue.

9. The Convener and the core group agencies such as UNEP, ESCWA, FAO and UNDP should consider allocating enough funding dedicated to support TWG processes.

Amendments to the TWG Workplan

The second meeting of the TWG held on the 10th November 2010 realized that a number of activities agreed in 2008 have to either be adjusted on cancelled.

The Work Plan for 2011 is suggested to be as follows:

1. Establish the Information Sharing e-Platform utilizing UN-ISDR & ESCWA managed e-platforms: modalities to be discussed and agreed upon
2. Conduct mapping exercise to identify agency programme, activities and expertise in the region with view to find common ground for joint actions (UNEP, ESCWA)
3. Organize the Third EGM on Assessment of Socio-economic Impacts of Climate Change on Water Resources in the Arab Region, Q3 2011 (lead: ECSWA, partners: UNEP, UNU, UN-ISDR,
4. Organize a Coordination Meeting of Regional Climate Change Centres as recommended by the LAS & the EGM on Water & Climate Change (UNEP, ESCWA, WMO)
5. Organize Regional Training on Assessment of Climate Change Mitigation Potential in the Arab Region (Lead: UNEP, ESCWA, UNU)
6. Third Meeting of the TWG: October 2011

2010 Workplan Implementation Progress

No.	Key Activity	Main Output	Status of Implementation
1	EGM on Vulnerability Assessment to Water Resources in the Arab region	Agreement on regional Climate Model List of Water Climate Vulnerability Indicators Water-Climate Sensitivity Map	The meeting is confirmed to be held 8-10 November 2010 Website: http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1338E
2	2 nd TWG Meeting		10 November 2010

ANNEXES

- A : TWG Meetings 2010
- B: TWG Terms of Reference
- C: 2010 Workplan of the TWG

ANNEX A - TWG Meetings

Date	Location	Meeting Report Available Online (RCM Website)	Any Comments
26 October 2008	Cairo	Yes	
10 November 2010	Beirut	Not yet	

ANNEX B - TWG Terms of Reference (revised on 10 November)

TOR - Thematic Working Group on Climate Change in the Arab Region

Background and rationale

Climate Change is becoming a global environmental challenge that may impede sustainable development and achievement of MDGs for developing countries. Under the leadership of the UN Secretary General himself, efforts of the UN System has been geared towards assisting developing countries addressing those climate change challenges but emphasized that in order to achieve meaningful results, such efforts should be well-coordinated and targeted at the global, regional and national level. At the global level, the UN Chief Executive Board for Coordination – High Level Committee on Programmes (CEB-HLCP) established a framework of coordination of UN System activities in climate change¹ and assigned conveners for following main areas of focus:

¹ CEB 2007: UN System Action Plan on Climate Change

No.	Areas of Focus	Convening Agencies
1	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation (REDD)	FAO, UNDP, UNEP
2	Technology Transfer	UNIDO, UNDESA World
3	Finance (Mitigation, Adaptation)	Bank, UNDP
4	Capacity Building	UNDP, UNEP
5	Adaptation	HLCP WG CC
6	Science, Assessment, Monitoring and Early Warning	WMO, UNESCO
7	Supporting Global, Regional and National Action	UNDP, UNDESA,
8	Public Awareness: UNEP, UN Communications Group	UN Regional Commissions
9	Climate Neutral UN	UNEP

The UN SG is convening regular meetings for the head of agencies and the climate change group to assess progress towards on-going climate negotiations and to jointly prepare policy statements for the UN family and coherent technical assistance programme to developing countries. It is expected that demand for UN support will increase considerably as we approach the UNFCCC COP in Copenhagen in 2009 and as developing countries are becoming more aware of challenges of climate change to their national development and the potential additional development assistance a future global climate change legal regime may bring.

The Arab region is thought to be more impacted by climate change not because of its climate characteristics but also because of high vulnerabilities of water resources, ecosystems, public health, food security, etc. which requires multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach where all agencies are engaged. With the help of the UN System and other partners, countries in the region have already initiated a number of projects and activities related to climate change. At the regional level, the League for Arab States, in collaboration with regional UN and non-UN organizations, has launched the process of developing an Arab Framework of Action on Climate Change (AFACC). Preliminary conclusions of the AFACC indicate that there is a long list of priorities and needs in the region ranging from provision of basic capacity building support to climate-proofing of infrastructure to the need for more investment flow to build resilience and to have meaningful economic opportunities in the mitigation side of climate change. The UN system is and will be responding to these needs and priorities through development and implementation of climate change related programmes, projects and activities. There are risks of duplication and overlaps of the work of the UN agencies in the region resulting in cost-inefficiencies, redundancies and less impact.

The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), convened by the UN Regional Commissions, is set up to promote a coordinated approach by the UN agencies to address development issues of concerns to the respective region. The RCM for the West Asia region is convened by UN ESCWA, meets every two years, and attended by almost all UN organization operating in the region. The last RCM meeting was held under the auspices of the UN Deputy Secretary

General in Beirut 13-14 September 2008. Around 22 UN agencies attended this meeting. The RCM agreed that more effective inter-agency coordination and collaboration at the operational level can be achieved through establishing small and functional working group organized around priority themes identified by RCM of the region. For the Arab region, RCM agreed to establish three Thematic Working Groups with their convening agencies as follows:

MDG Working Group: ESCWA

Food Crisis Working Group: FAO

Climate Change: UNEP

Participants to the session on the Climate Change WG recommended that the convening agencies initiate as soon as possible the process of developing TOR for the TWG, drafting a work plan and organize the first technical meeting for the Group. This draft TOR will be tabled at the first meeting of the Group and will be subject to members comments and advise.

Objective of the Climate Change WG

The objective of the Working Group (TWG CC) is to strengthen *results* and enhance *impacts* of the UN system operations through effective networking, sharing of information and coherent programming at the regional level.

Scope of Work and Elements of Collaboration

In line with the regional and national priorities identified in relevant regional and national sustainable development initiatives, plans and programmes and especially those related to climate change, the Working Group will be a forum for:

- Agreeing on collaborative framework to further strengthen the work of the Climate Change Working Group
- Briefing member agencies on current and planned climate change related activities in the region, preparing inventories of climate change related activities
- Providing an overview and reflecting on the state of global knowledge about climate change trends from the scientific, research, programmes, funding and international cooperation regimes.
- Sharing of reports, research and policy notes, analytical studies and guiding tools conducted or developed by the agency specifically for the region

- Based on the UN agency inventory referred to above and reviewing the regional climate change activity plans by agencies, analyzing gaps in the regional programmes/activities of the UN system entities as they relate to selected focus area and assess how these gaps will be addressed
- Reviewing and identifying joint projects to be undertaken under the auspices of the TWG. Joint projects and activities should be based on priority needs of the region
- Mapping of agency expertise, pooling them when necessary to support inter-agency collaborative efforts
- Providing technical support to the League for Arab States and to its established subsidiary bodies in implementing the Arab Framework of Action on Climate Change and other key regional initiatives and processes
- Supporting the establishment of regional networks for dealing with various dimension of the climate change; e.g national focal point system, research institutions, adaptation, technology transfer, etc.

Membership and Mode of Operation

The Working Group will be constituted from representative of member agencies of the UN System working in the region. Each agency will nominate a focal point at the technical and operational level in the agency's climate change programme.

Meetings of the WG will be held regularly and when necessary, but at least once a year. UNEP, as the convening agency, will call for the meeting and will help develop the agenda and meeting logistics. Hosting of the meeting will be open to other agencies as well. Each agency will cover its own participation.

Meetings can also be held via tele/video conferences, Skype or other IT means.

The Group may invite experts or officials as the need arise for policy brief or specialized technical advisory services.

Reports of the WG will be submitted to the RCM convener, ESCWA, who will be responsible to ensure wider dissemination of the reports to other stakeholders at the regional and the global UN inter-agency bodies such as CEB/HLPC and the UN SG Climate Change Team.

The following table summarizes priority areas of focus of the TWG

Focus Area	Priority Activities
Adaptation	Impacts and Vulnerability Assessment of Climate Change on Water Resources of the Region Methodologies & Tools for Impacts and Vulnerability Assessments Impacts of Climate Change on Public Health Regional Climate Modeling (Global-Regional Downscaling) Adaptation Strategies
Mitigation	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Assessment of Mitigation Potential
Networking and Knowledge Management	Regional Inter-agency e-Platform for Information Sharing
Technology Transfer & Financing	Technology Needs Assessments & TT Projects Climate Financing