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**Regional Program for  
Trade and Environment Capacity Building in the Arab Region**

**Progress Report**

**1 November 2007 – 30 September 2008**

**I. BACKGROUND**

The Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) of the League of Arab States (LAS) approved by resolution the adoption of the Regional Program for Trade and Environment Capacity Building in the Arab Region during its meeting of 3-4 June 2003 in Beirut, Lebanon. The resolution was taken based on the recommendation of the Joint Commission for Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR). Support for the program was reaffirmed at the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of CAMRE on 9 December 2003 (Resolution 190Q, Article 3).

**II. IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING MECHANISMS**

The regional program is coordinated by a Joint Secretariat consisting of the CAMRE Technical Secretariat, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Regional Office for Western Asia of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROWA).

The framework document of the program establishes that the Joint Secretariat shall prepare an annual report for review, comment and approval by CAMRE to assess progress in implementing program activities. Four previous progress reports have been prepared by ESCWA on behalf of the Joint Secretariat to support the monitoring and planning of the regional program. The first followed the initial year of program implementation (June 2003 to June 2004), the second covered the period from June 2004 to October 2005, the third reported on the period from October 2005 to November 2006, and the fourth covered the period from December 2006 to October 2007. These reports were well-received by JCEDAR and CAMRE. The CAMRE Technical Secretariat thus invited ESCWA to prepare this fifth progress report of the program, which covers the period from 1 November 2007 to 30 September 2008.

Preparation of the progress report is based on activities conducted by program partners, which are represented on the Working Group on Trade and Environment Capacity Building in the Arab Region. The permanent members of the Working Group, as listed in the framework document, are the:

- Technical Secretariat of the Council for Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment of the League of Arab States (CAMRE Technical Secretariat/LAS);
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA);
- United Nations Environment Program Regional Office for Western Asia (UNEP/ROWA);
- United Nations Environment Program Economics and Trade Branch (UNEP/ETB);
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

In accordance with Section IX (C) on partnerships, as detailed in the enabling document of the regional program, representation of the non-permanent members of the Working Group would be determined by the Joint Secretariat, and approved by CAMRE, with membership reviewed every two years.

Since the launching of the regional program, the following institutions have served as members of the Working Group and have contributed to the implementation of the program. Following a review conducted by the Joint Secretariat, it is recommended that they remain members of the Working Group during the upcoming reporting period.

- Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)
- General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries (GUCCIAAC)

With regards the members of the Working Group that would serve as the representative of an academic institution and of a financial institution, the Joint Secretariat obtained in 2008 the approval of the following two institutions to serve in the Working Group for the next two years:

- Arabian Gulf University
- Union of Arab Banks

### **III. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

The program is implemented by focusing on building the capacity of public and private stakeholders in three priority areas of the program, namely market access, competitiveness and dispute resolution. Skills development and assistance to support these efforts focus on governance, policy analysis, enabling institutions, negotiations, information dissemination and private sector development. Activities take the form of policy advisory services (PAS), technical assistance (TA), national roundtables (NR), regional training seminars (RTS) or regional expert group meetings (EGM). Additional details on these components are provided in Annex I.

### **IV. COMPLETED AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

There are several activities and on-going project being conducted that support the implementation of the regional program. A listing of activities completed since the submission of the last progress report is provided in Table 1 below. Table 2 then lists on-going projects, including their completed and upcoming activities. Other activities anticipated for the coming years are listed in Table 3. Interested parties are invited to contact the implementing agencies for additional information on specific activities and opportunities for collaboration.

Particular attention is drawn to the elaboration in 2008 of a specialized website that is dedicated to the program. The website provides information on the program and serves as a portal to program meetings, publications and implementing partners. Yearly progress reports are also posted on the website, which may be accessed at the following address: <http://www.escwa.un.org/tear/index.asp>

### **V. NEXT STEPS**

This progress report is submitted for consideration by JCEDAR during their tenth regular session, which will be held from 9-12 November 2008 in Cairo, Egypt. Comments received from JCEDAR will be incorporated in a revised version of this report. The final progress report will be submitted for review and approval by the CAMRE Executive Bureau and CAMRE at their subsequent annual meetings in December 2008.

**Table 1. Completed Activities (November 2007 – September 2008)**

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Market Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance</li> <li>Policy analysis</li> <li>Negotiation</li> </ul>	Capacity Building in Trade and the Environment <i>Completed activities:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A global project that conducted policy analysis and training to strengthen capacity to formulate effective trade and environment policies, taking into account their implications for market access, MEAs and national priorities</li> <li>Financially supported by United Nations Development Account</li> <li>Areas of analysis based on priority-setting and requests of Member States led to preparation of studies on environmental goods and services, and non-tariff barriers to trade impacting the fisheries sector and the agricultural/ agro-industrial sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA with other United Nations Regional Commissions (ECA, ESCAP, ECLAC)</li> <li>ESCAP serves as lead agency of project</li> <li>ESCWA leads activities in the ESCWA/Arab regions</li> <li>Project implemented in cooperation with UNCTAD, UNEP and WTO</li> </ul>	2004-2007	Arab countries (in the ESCWA and ECA Regions)
Dispute Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study entitled “The liberalization of trade in environmental goods and services in the ESCWA and Arab regions” (Available in English and Arabic) (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2007/WP.1)</li> <li>Study entitled “Trade and environment dimensions of the fisheries sector in the Arab countries: The case of Yemen and Oman” (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2007/WP.2)</li> <li>High-Level Meeting on Mutually-supportive Trade and Environment Regimes: Perspectives and Lessons Learned at the Regional Level (Geneva, 29 November 2007)</li> <li>Address by UNCTAD at the CTE Session (30 November 2007)</li> <li>Preparation of CD-ROM with all project-related documents</li> <li>Final external evaluation of the project received positive marks.</li> </ul>				

**Table 1. Completed Activities (November 2007 – September 2008), *continued***

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Market Access Competitiveness Dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy analysis</li> </ul>	Expert Group Meeting on Trade and Environment Priorities in the Arab Region (Cairo, Egypt)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy priorities in the Arab Countries</li> <li>Incorporating environmental considerations into trade agreements</li> <li>Impact of globalization and trade liberalization on the environment</li> <li>Climate Change and Emissions Trading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LAS</li> <li>ESCWA</li> <li>UNEP/ROWA</li> </ul>	11-13 November 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arab countries</li> </ul>
Dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling institution</li> </ul>	Regional Workshop on Combating Illegal Traffic and Dump of Hazardous Wastes in the Arab Countries: Towards A Regional Strategy and Action Plan (Cairo, Egypt)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking for tracking and combating illegal traffic of hazardous wastes &amp; chemicals.</li> <li>Terms of compliance under the Basel Convention</li> <li>To source the different ways that illegal traffic violations can be detected &amp; reported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basel Convention Regional Center</li> <li>UNEP/ROWA</li> <li>LAS</li> </ul>	8-10 December 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Port enforcement officers in all Arab Countries</li> </ul>

**Table 1. Completed Activities (November 2007 – September 2008), *continued***

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling institutions</li> </ul>	Roundtable Meeting of Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in the Arab Region (Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key regional priorities on SCP</li> <li>Present ongoing initiatives on SCP in the region</li> <li>Contribute to the Marrakech Process 10YFP</li> <li>Cooperation between the Arab Region and the Marrakech Task Forces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LAS</li> <li>UNEP</li> <li>ESCWA</li> <li>UN-DESA</li> <li>Federal Environmental Agency (UAE)</li> </ul>	17-19 March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional stakeholders, environment authorities, development agencies, businesses and NGOs</li> </ul>
Dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance</li> <li>Policy Analysis</li> </ul>	First joint meeting of the GCC Ozone, Chemical & Customs Groups (Manama, Bahrain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presenting of chemical cluster of MEAs and their related obligations</li> <li>Elaborate the role of UNEP in assisting countries to implement these MEAs</li> <li>Explain the role of Customs Officers in curbing illegal trade in chemicals under these MEAs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNEP/ROWA</li> <li>GCC Secretariat</li> </ul>	7-9 January 2008	Ozone, chemical & customs stakeholders in GCC member states
Dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling institutions</li> </ul>	National Train-the-Trainers Workshop for Customs Officers (Sana'a, Yemen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train Customs Officers on identifying ODSs and curbing illegal trade of the same</li> <li>Capacity building of Customs Officers in Montreal Protocol obligations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNEP/ROWA</li> <li>Yemen Environmental Protection Authority</li> </ul>	22-26 March 2008	Customs authorities & relevant stakeholders in Yemen

**Table 1. Completed Activities (November 2007 – September 2008), *continued***

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance</li> <li>Policy Analysis</li> </ul>	Second joint-meeting of the 3 GCC Groups (Ozone, Chemicals & Customs) on Green Customs Initiative (GCI) (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activation of GCI in the region by drafting work plan for the three groups for 2008-2009.</li> <li>Review HS-code of chemicals used in GCC member states &amp; suggest individual digits for coding chemicals under MEAs, in order to ease monitoring &amp; control of the same.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNEP/ROWA</li> <li>GCC Secretariat</li> </ul>	4-5 May 2008	Ozone, chemicals & customs stakeholders in the GCC member states
Market Access Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information dissemination</li> </ul>	Training module on "Global Environmental issues"	<p>T&amp;E sub-module focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trade/Environment Relationships</li> <li>GATT and the Environment</li> <li>Doha Mandate on Trade and Environment</li> <li>Concerns of Developed Countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AGU</li> </ul>	February - June 2008	Graduate students of the environmental management program at AGU

**Table 1. Completed Activities (November 2007 – September 2008), *continued***

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Development</li> <li>• Governance</li> </ul>	Contributed a chapter entitled “Financing of Environment Programmes, Private-Public Partnership” to the IFAD report on Arab Environment: Future Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the cost of environmental degradation continues to grow for the Arab region, the financial allocation from countries does not reflect a comprehensive understanding of the gravity of the problem. There is a need to look for innovative ways of financing the environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNEP/DTIE, Economics and Trade Branch</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Arab countries</li> </ul>
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Analysis</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Information Dissemination</li> </ul>	Report: Reforming Energy Subsidies <i>Opportunities to Contribute to the Climate Change Agenda</i> (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This report summarizes the nature, types and impacts of subsidies on energy that undermine the pursuit of sustainable development. It also offers recommendations to policy makers on how to design and implement subsidies reform in an environmentally, socially and economically sound manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNEP DTIE, Economics and Trade Branch</li> </ul>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy makers, on international, regional and national level, mainly of countries that highly subsidize fossil fuel production and/or consumption.</li> </ul>

**Table 1. Completed Activities (November 2007 – September 2008), *continued***

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy dialogue</li> <li>• Information dissemination</li> </ul>	Post Bali: A Dialogue on Trade, Climate Change and Development (Geneva, Switzerland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The objective of this dialogue was to explore underlying issues at the interface of trade and climate change and their likely impact on development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNEP DTIE, Economics and Trade Branch</li> </ul>	11 Feb 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egypt and Yemen attended the meeting</li> </ul>
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy analysis</li> <li>• Information dissemination</li> </ul>	A study on “Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evidence presented in this study supports the argument that organic agriculture can be good for food security in Africa — equal or better than most conventional systems and more likely to be sustainable in the longer-term.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF)</li> </ul>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North African Arab Countries</li> </ul>
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy analysis</li> <li>• Information dissemination</li> <li>• Market Access</li> </ul>	A study on “Best Practices for Organic Policy: What developing country Governments can do to promote the organic agriculture Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report develops 35 detailed recommendations for countries interested in developing their organic sector. These have been divided into recommendations for (i) General Policy, (ii) Standards and Regulation, (iii) Markets, (iv) Production, and (v) Others including training, education and research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF)</li> </ul>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The study draws on experience of Egypt, including others.</li> <li>• Arab countries</li> </ul>

**Table 2. On-Going Projects (2008-2009)**

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Project	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Market Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy Analysis</li> <li>Information dissemination</li> </ul>	Policy advisory services (PAS) – Development of Regional SCP Strategy & Action Plan in the Arab Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Regional SCP Strategy in the Arab Region will be translated into a SCP Action Plan in the Arab Region, by a Task Force composed of LAS, ESCWA and UNEP. The Action Plan will be presented at CAMRE 20<sup>th</sup> Session in December 2008 for approval by the Ministerial Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LAS</li> <li>UNEP</li> <li>ESCWA</li> </ul>	July-October 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment</li> </ul>
Market Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information dissemination</li> </ul>	Maintenance and update of the program website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program website posted online in September 2008 after consultation with program partners</li> <li>ESCWA will continue to maintain and update website based on inputs received from Working Group members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA</li> </ul>	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Arab countries</li> <li>National, regional and global institutions and stakeholders</li> </ul>
Competitiveness						
Dispute resolution						

**Table 3. Upcoming activities (2009-2011)**

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Market Access Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy analysis</li> <li>Private sector development</li> </ul>	Study on Increasing the Competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises through the Use of Environmentally Sound Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on renewable energy and waste recycling technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA</li> </ul>	November 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA countries</li> </ul>
Market Access Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy analysis</li> </ul>	Study on Biotechnology Applications for Enhanced Productivity and Competitiveness in the ESCWA region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study will inform ESCWA countries about applications, opportunities and challenges related to the use of biotechnologies in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA</li> </ul>	September 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA countries, with implications for the Arab region</li> </ul>
Market Access Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy analysis</li> </ul>	EGM on the Production and Use of Biotechnologies in the ESCWA region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EGM will seek to enhance understanding and coordination on biotechnology developments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA</li> </ul>	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCWA countries, with implications for the Arab region</li> </ul>
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance</li> <li>Enabling institutions</li> </ul>	Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training Workshops to sensitize and raise the awareness of high level Government decision makers on SPP in order to speed up the implementation of SPP and resource efficiency policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNEP</li> <li>LAS</li> <li>ESCWA</li> </ul>	25-27 November 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders from Arab Environment, Trade and Finance Ministries</li> </ul>

**Table 3. Upcoming activities (2009-2011), *continued***

Priority Area	Area of Skill Development	Activity	Description	Implementing Agencies	Duration	Beneficiaries
Market Access  Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information dissemination</li> </ul>	Training module on "Global Environmental issues"	<p>T&amp;E sub-module will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trade/Environment Relationships</li> <li>GATT and the Environment</li> <li>Doha Mandate on Trade and Environment</li> <li>Concerns of Developed Countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AGU</li> </ul>	February - June 2009	Graduate students of the environmental management program at AGU

## Annex I: Implementation Framework

### Priorities for Action

- **Market access** – namely matters related to conformity with discriminatory regulatory and voluntary non-tariff barriers to trade, particularly those that deal with product standards, process requirements and conformity assessment procedures.
- **Competitiveness** – namely matters related to technology transfer, intellectual property rights, efficiency, eco-labeling schemes, the special needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as specific issues of concern for the competitiveness of the following sectors: agriculture, agro-food, fisheries, textiles, tourism, environmental services and chemicals, among others.
- **Dispute resolution** - namely matters related to improving understanding of the trade provisions of MEAs, strengthening understanding about dispute resolution mechanisms, and reconciling differences in interpretation and implementation of environmental provisions in bilateral, regional and global trade agreements ratified, signed or being negotiated by Arab Member States.

### Areas for skills development:

- **Governance** – as it relates to proposing institutional arrangements for regional coordination of trade and environment related policies and standards, strengthening inter-ministerial policy coordination and coherence, and facilitating public-private partnerships.
- **Policy analysis** – by assisting in the identification of data needs and the collection of relevant statistic to support trade and environment policy analysis, as well as by providing training and technical assistance in empirical analysis, strategic assessments, policy formulation and policy recommendation.
- **Enabling institutions** – by strengthening institutions responsible for overseeing and/or establishing recognized accreditation schemes and certification bodies in the Arab region, as well as customs authorities.
- **Negotiation** – by providing training in negotiation skills on trade and environmental issues, the development of international standards, agenda setting, coalition building and the use of analysis to support negotiation positions.
- **Information dissemination** – by providing increased access to information on relevant standards and requirements in major destination markets (globally and within the region), increasing awareness among Arab consumer groups about sustainable consumption, and strengthening regional information networks through the use of information technologies and other media.
- **Private sector development** – by facilitating the identification of priority investments in environmental infrastructure to support greater competitiveness; by strengthening business networks and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and by providing information and advisory services on eco-efficiency and cleaner production.

### Activities:

- **Policy advisory services (PAS)** – would be provided on a demand-driven basis to government officials and would involve preparing policy papers and/or conducting mission to Member State in response to specific requests for assistance;
- **Technical assistance (TA)** – would be provided on a demand-driven basis to governmental, private and non-governmental stakeholders on technical issues that may require consultancy support;
- **National roundtables (NR)** – would be organized in a Member State in coordination with local stakeholders to facilitate inter-ministerial coordination and public-private consultation;
- **Regional training seminars (RTS)** – would be conducted to provide extended technical training on a regional or sub-regional basis to public and/or private stakeholder groups and NGOs; and
- **Regional expert group meetings (EGM)** – would be hosted to formulate regional approaches and positions on trade and environment policies and priorities, and to foster networking.