

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

Climate Change Will Intensify Development Challenges in the Arab Countries

Sustainable Energy a Key Component of the Response

UNDP Convenes Experts in Bahrain to Work Toward Solutions

Arab Climate Resilience Initiative to be launched by end-of-year

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Al Jawhara Center, Arabian Gulf University

Manama, 6 October, 2010— Experts and policy leaders convened by the Regional Bureau for Arab States of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP-RBAS), in partnership with the Arabian Gulf University, are meeting today and tomorrow under the auspices of the National Oil and Gas Authority to take stock of challenges and opportunities related to sustainable energy in the Arab countries.

Energy is at the heart of most critical economic, environmental and developmental issues facing the world today. Access to energy services is indispensable for global prosperity. Developing countries in particular need to expand access to reliable, efficient and modern energy services if they are to reduce poverty and improve the health of their citizens, while at the same time increasing productivity, enhancing competitiveness and promoting economic growth.

Current energy systems are inadequate to meet the needs of the world's poor and are jeopardizing progress toward human development. A well-performing energy system that improves efficient access to modern forms of energy would strengthen the opportunities for the poorest few billion people on the planet to escape the worst impacts of poverty. Such a system is also essential for meeting wider development objectives.

The world economy is expected to double in size over the next twenty years, and the world population is expected to increase to 9 billion people by 2050. Such growth in economic activity, as well as population, inevitably puts strain on all kinds of natural resources. Policymakers and experts around the world are actively engaged in analyzing, proposing and negotiating collective and other solutions to increase both access to and the efficient use of resources so that the world can accommodate increasing activity without jeopardizing development goals, including adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

Recent years have seen these issues climb to the top of the global policy agenda, as well as at the national level, with governments and other stakeholders around the world creating new policies and significantly increasing investment in order to increase energy access and energy efficiency with a view to enhancing overall energy sustainability. These issues are especially lively in the Arab countries, where across the region a range of policies and initiatives are cropping up that

show promise for energy sustainability. However there still remain challenges, ranging from policy challenges to technological challenges to financing challenges and more. The path to energy efficiency will require the sustained attention of policy leaders, and coordination across a broad set of stakeholders.

The consultation held today and tomorrow, entitled *Climate Change Impacts in the Arab Region: Towards Sustainable Energy* will focus primarily on the resources, challenges and opportunities for the Arab countries to make accelerated progress toward sustainable energy, contributing to increasing access to energy at home and around the world, while also playing a leading role in the drive to energy efficiency.

A broad and high-level consultation, the two-day meeting will bring together experts and policy leaders from the Arab countries. Discussion panels will cover a range of topics that cover both the broader context of sustainable energy, including challenges related to energy access, climate change and enabling environments, as well as specific policy issues related to the promotion of sustainable energy. The meetings will also serve as an opportunity to take stock of the range of innovative institutions that are already making tremendous progress in increasing the sustainability of energy in the Arab countries. Economic and financial opportunities related to development will also be covered, with a focus on how energy diversification can promote growth and create jobs. Challenges and opportunities related to knowledge and technology transfer will be covered as well. The net outcome of the meeting will be a synthesis of the challenges, priorities and opportunities in the Arab countries in the area of sustainable energy.

In this respect the consultation to be held today and tomorrow are part of a broader process led by UNDP-RBAS and national partners to build the knowledge, momentum and commitment to address the climate challenge as an utmost development priority, following the recommendations of the *Arab Human Development Report 2009* as well as the *Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change*, the latter of which called for policy action ranging from integration of policies to deal with climate change in all sectors, adoption of national and regional climate change action plans, and carrying out studies to better understand the threat..

Over the course of 2010, UNDP-RBAS in partnership with national governments and institutions has heeded that call, catalyzing and expanding a network of experts and policy leaders, sponsoring studies and background papers, and organizing a number of regional consultations in order to gain a broad understanding of climate change dynamics in the region, identify and begin to fill critical knowledge gap, and develop the capacity of stakeholders in the Arab countries to respond to the climate change challenge as an utmost policy priority.

The consultation of today and tomorrow comes on the heels of two major consultations organized in recent months by UNDP-RBAS in partnership with national institutions. The first consultation, "**Climate Change Impacts in the Arab Region: Water Scarcity, Drought and Population Mobility**", was held in Damascus in partnership with the Ministry of Environment of the Syrian Arab Republic from 15-16 September. The second consultation on "**Sea-Level Rise, Coastal Erosion and Human Development**", took place on 20-21 September in conjunction with the National Water Research Center in Cairo, Egypt. These consultations will continue to build knowledge and generate partnerships for responding to the climate challenge, and will feed into a high-level regional meeting in Morocco from 3-5 November, on which occasion the findings and recommendations of the consultative process will be validated, preparing the ground for the launching of an *Arab Climate Resilience Initiative* that will subsequently be launched and endorsed by UNDP-RBAS and partnering Arab governments.

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UNDP is the UN's global development network. The organization advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources that help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.

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