

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme



Climate Change Will Intensify Development Challenges in the Arab Countries

Sea-Level Rise and Coastal Erosion among Main Concerns

UNDP Convenes Experts in Cairo to Work Toward Solutions

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

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Conrad Hotel, September 20-21, 2010

The second regional consultative meeting on the impacts of climate change in the Arab region was held in Cairo over the last two days, hosted by the National Water Research Center (NWRC) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the participation of the League of Arab States as well as representatives of governments and experts in a number of Arab countries. The consultation entitled **Climate Change Impacts in the Arab Region: Sea Level Rise, Coastal Erosion and Human Development** addressed these three inter-related impacts.

The discussion of this consultation workshop focused on:

- Discussing national and regional priorities as well as opportunities for cooperation among Arab countries in the response to climate change issues;
- Developing recommendations for activities and policies that respond to the priorities;

- Expanding the knowledge base and setting the pace for policy dialogue on climate change in the region; and
- Mobilizing key actors to address the related policies and strategic actions.

NWRC's Chairperson, Dr. Shaden Abdul Gawad, has said that with well over half of the Arab region's 359 million people residing within 100 km of a coastline, and with the overwhelming majority of major cities and economic activity occurring in coastal areas, the impact of sea-level rise will have serious consequences on the region's coastlines and low-lying deltas and islands, including its small-island states. More frequent incidences of flooding and storm surges, as well as saltwater intrusion into fresh water supplies, are likely to lead to severe land degradation and biodiversity loss. This in turn would have a negative impact on food security and rural livelihoods in the Arab countries.

Increasing sea-surface temperatures and coastline erosion will negatively impact coastal ecosystems, thus mounting formidable challenges to the tourism sector and to fisheries. Furthermore, residential areas, ports and other facilities are likely to be damaged or destroyed by more frequent cyclones and storm surges, which in turn will negatively affect producers and consumers farther inland.

Chief of the Regional Programme Division in UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), Adel Abdellatif, said that the first regional consultative meeting to discuss impacts of climate change on water scarcity and drought in the Arab Region was held in Damascus, in partnership between UNDP and the Syrian Ministry of Environment. The third regional consultative meeting on rationalizing energy efficiency as well as on new and renewable energies will be held in Bahrain in partnership with the Arabian Gulf University.

In the final meeting, to be held next month in Morocco, the findings and recommendations of the consultative process will be validated, paving the way for the launching of an Arab Climate Resilience Initiative that will be launched and endorsed by UNDP-RBAS and partnering Arab governments by the end of 2010.

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