

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

**REGIONAL REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION**

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Preface

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), due to take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, is an extremely important milestone for the international community. In fact, it has been organized in order to secure renewed political commitment to sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in implementing the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges.

The world is changing and our planet is experiencing heavy environmental, social and economic threats. The 2008 financial crises, the recent Arab uprisings and the continuous pressure climate change imposes on our ecosystem call for a serious intervention to include sustainability in our approach to Arab institutions and society.

Rio+20, which has a thematic focus on a green economy and institutions for sustainable development, represents a timely opportunity to review progress towards sustainable development in the Arab region, the institutional framework through which it is being pursued and the options available for effective implementation.

The issue of the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD) has been raised repeatedly in major summits on sustainable development in an effort to identify the institutional reforms needed to address emerging challenges related to sustainable development. In the Arab region, countries have responded to global calls to mutually reinforce the three pillars of sustainable development by restructuring their national and regional institutional setups, and they have registered numerous developments on that front. However, a significant gap still remains in developing a fully integrated approach to environmental, social and economic policy-making and decision-making in the Arab region, which presents a major hurdle for its long-term development.

The present review updates and builds upon a previous study conducted in 2003 as part of the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, evaluates the progress that has been made in implementing its recommendations and presents an updated set of recommendations that are directly related to the current regional and global context.

Rio+20 is just a few months away and it is very likely that the international community will receive important inputs for redesigning its dynamics and might also receive a clear mandate for changing its IFSD at the international level.

The Arab world will then have to work fast to react to these international changes by reshaping, reorganizing and creating bodies and institutions responsible for sustainable development in a rapidly changing socio-economic context.

We are happy to report that the study has been prepared through an organic process led by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), who consulted with Arab and international experts, officials and resource persons to solicit their views and gather information on the development of the IFSD in the region.

The review process started with responses to a questionnaire posted on ESCWA's website for input from all interested parties. Following a revision of the first draft, there was a broad and intense consultation process, including a very useful Workshop on the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region organized by the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment in Saudi Arabia together with ESCWA, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the League of Arab States (LAS). At the workshop, the review was discussed with sustainable development institutions in the Arab region, focusing on the needed reforms to the IFSD at the national, regional and global levels in the light of new and emerging challenges. The final draft was then presented for review and discussion at the Arab Regional

Preparatory Meeting on Rio+20 on 16-17 October 2011, which was jointly organized by ESCWA, LAS and the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia.

The review was prepared by the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division of ESCWA in collaboration with various national and regional experts, all of whom contributed case studies and participated in debates aimed at developing or improving the various drafts of this publication. We hope that the review will serve as a major resource for national and regional stakeholders who are actively involved in the three main dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social and economic.

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Introduction

Many changes have taken place in the Arab region and globally since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) and the 2002 follow-up conference in Johannesburg. Significant progress has been made towards many of the goals defined at Rio, but others remain elusive. Some of the environmental, social and economic conditions of greatest concern have improved but others have not, while some have continued to deteriorate. Considerable uncertainty has emerged as a result of the global economic crisis of 2008, followed by the region's political upheavals in 2011. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) due to take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 presents a timely opportunity to review progress towards sustainable development in the Arab region, the institutional framework through which it is being pursued and the options available for effective implementation.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) conducted a review in 2003 as part of the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002, which examined the evolution of the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD) in the Arab region up to that time and presented a series of recommendations for its further development.¹ The present review updates the previous study, evaluates the progress that has been made in implementing its recommendations and presents an updated set of recommendations that are directly related to the current regional and global context.

The study was prepared through an organic process led by ESCWA. Arab experts, officials and resource persons were consulted to solicit their views and gather information on the development of the IFSD in the region. In addition, a questionnaire was posted on ESCWA's website for input from all interested parties. Following the revision of the first draft, a final draft of the study has been presented for review and discussion at the Workshop on the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region, held in Jeddah in October 2011, and at the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for Rio+20 in Cairo, which was jointly organized by ESCWA, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) in October 2011.

As noted in ESCWA's 2003 review, a significant increase in the environmental commitment of most Arab countries was stimulated by the 1992 Earth Summit, including the establishment/restructuring of environmental institutions, the formulation of national environmental strategies and action plans, the ratification of multilateral and regional environmental agreements and the enactment of numerous laws and regulations in support of environmental policies. However, a significant gap still remains in developing a fully integrated approach to environmental, social and economic policy-making and decision-making. Although the Arab region is not unique in this respect it presents a major hurdle for its long-term development. Decisions taken purely on economic grounds may deliver successful outcomes in the short term, but cannot do so in the long term without taking full account of their impact on, as well as their dependence on, the region's social development and environmental integrity. For this reason, the long-term prosperity of the Arab region is critically dependent on an integrated strategic approach to economic, social and environmental policy-making.

This study reviews existing governance systems for sustainable development at the regional level and in select Arab countries, highlights progress made and current trends, identifies promising developments and illustrative examples that could help achieve sustainable development in the region, and proposes a series of actions and policy recommendations to consider in the preparations for Rio+20. Its timing is considered to be crucial given the rapidly changing global context and current uncertainties about the region's own organic development, and builds upon many of the issues raised at the WSSD as cited in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) (see box 1).

¹ ESCWA, *Governance for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region: Institutions and Instruments for Moving Beyond an Environmental Management Culture*, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (New York, United Nations, 2003).

Box 1. Strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable development at the regional level

158. Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the Summit should be effectively pursued at the regional and subregional levels, through the regional commissions and other regional and subregional institutions and bodies.

159. Intraregional coordination and cooperation on sustainable development should be improved among the regional commissions, United Nations Funds, programmes and agencies, regional development banks and other regional and subregional institutions and bodies. This should include, as appropriate, support for development, enhancement and implementation of agreed regional sustainable development strategies and action plans, reflecting national and regional priorities.

160. In particular, taking into account relevant provisions of Agenda 21, the regional commissions, in collaboration with other regional and subregional bodies, should:

(a) Promote the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into their work in a balanced way, including through implementation of Agenda 21. To this end, the regional commissions should enhance their capacity through internal action and be provided, as appropriate, with external support;

(b) Facilitate and promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development into the work of regional, subregional and other bodies, for example by facilitating and strengthening the exchange of experiences, including national experience, best practices, case studies and partnership experience related to the implementation of Agenda 21;

(c) Assist in the mobilization of technical and financial assistance, and facilitate the provision of adequate financing for the implementation of regionally and subregionally agreed sustainable development programmes and projects, including addressing the objective of poverty eradication;

(d) Continue to promote multi-stakeholder participation and encourage partnerships to support the implementation of Agenda 21 at the regional and subregional levels.

161. Regionally and subregionally agreed sustainable development initiatives and programmes, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the interregional aspects of the globally agreed Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, should be supported.

Source: World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

I. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. EVOLUTION AND CHANGES TO THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK BETWEEN THE 1992 EARTH SUMMIT AND THE UPCOMING RIO+20

The 1992 Earth Summit established the goal of sustainable development as an international norm. The concept emerged in the 1970s, triggered by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 and the Club of Rome's controversial report *Limits to Growth* published in the same year. While the Club of Rome report focused on the depletion of natural resources, the Stockholm conference was convened mainly in response to rising concern in industrialized countries over ecological deterioration due to industrial pollution and the impacts of pollution on human health and well-being. The background report of the conference argued that 'technological man' was 'on a course which could alter dangerously, and perhaps irreversibly, the natural systems of his planet upon which his biological survival depends', while most of the world's population had still 'hardly raised their claims on the planet above those of neolithic man'. The conference was attended by many developing countries (including 15 from the Arab region) who reflected on the fact that environmental pollution might be the cost of catching up with the industrialized countries. India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi encapsulated this debate with her observation that 'of all the pollutants we face, the worst is poverty – we want more development'.

Gandhi's remark triggered the subsequent quest for a new form of development that would be environmentally sustainable. This led to the World Conservation Strategy of 1980 and the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Norway's premier Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Brundtland Report was instrumental in giving worldwide currency to the concept of sustainable development and provided its widely accepted definition: 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This definition underlined the ethical notion of equity between generations and brought the concept a step further towards meeting the requisites of social justice. The subsequent global dialogue on sustainable development culminated in the Earth Summit in 1992.

The Earth Summit spawned many other conferences and conventions through which international agreement has been forged on specific aspects of sustainable development. The principal ones are listed in table 1.

TABLE 1. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES HELD AND CONVENTIONS ESTABLISHED ON ISSUES RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN RIO AND JOHANNESBURG (1992-2002)

Year	Conference or convention
1992	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) (Rio de Janeiro)
1992	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Rio de Janeiro)
1992	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro)
1994	International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo)
1994	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Paris)
1994	Draft Declaration of Principles on Human Rights and the Environment (Geneva)
1995	Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (Marrakesh)

TABLE 1 (*continued*)

Year	Conference or convention
1995	World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen)
1995	Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing)
1996	United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II (Istanbul)
1997	Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Kyoto)
2000	United Nations Millennium Summit (New York)
2000	Biosafety Protocol to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (Cartagena)
2001	United Nations Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm)
2002	International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey)
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg)

The WSSD, the follow-up conference held in Johannesburg in 2002, aimed to build on earlier achievements and expedite the realization of the remaining goals. To this end, further commitments were made in the JPOI.

In response to suggestions from the European Union, the WSSD introduced a change to the language used in the description of sustainable development, which subsequently influenced the interpretation of the concept. The 1992 Earth Summit saw sustainable development as a single development process with economic, social and environmental dimensions. The JPOI defined it as three distinct processes which form interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars: (a) economic development, (b) social development, and (c) environmental protection. By drawing a distinction between economic development and social development and by describing environmental protection as a process distinct from either form of development, the change of language diluted the emphasis which the Earth Summit placed on the need to incorporate environmental and social considerations into economic decision-making.

Since WSSD, international efforts have focused mainly on implementing existing agreements, such as through the Conferences of the Parties to the Conventions on Biodiversity and Climate Change, rather than developing new ones. Table 2 shows a selection of the main conferences and meetings related to sustainable development since 2002.

Several major global events have had a strong influence on understanding and implementing the sustainable development concept. The publication of the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2001 gave renewed impetus to global concern for sustainable development, with an overriding emphasis on climate change. This was reinforced by the 2006 Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, whose use of mainstream economic analysis captured the attention of policy-makers. A growing realization that mitigating action was unlikely to prevent serious adverse effects shifted attention onto adaptation. However, the economic crisis of 2008 changed the agenda yet again. An initial loss of faith in the established economic model was soon countered by strenuous efforts to restore economic growth, but now included the idea of a ‘green stimulus’ in the policy package. This encouraged renewed interest in developing a ‘green economy’ with a particular focus on investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency and low-carbon transport. In addressing climate change, this focus on energy issues was largely in response to growing concerns over the availability of conventional energy resources in the face of rapidly rising demand in countries such as China and India.

TABLE 2. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS ON IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SINCE 2002

Year	Conference or meeting
2002-2011	Meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-11 to CSD-19)
2002	Second World Assembly on Ageing
2002	International Conference on Financing for Development
2003	International Conference on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (CICI)
2003	World Summit on the Information Society
2003	International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation
2005	International Renewable Energy Conference
2005	Development Forum on “Integrating economic and social policies to achieve the United Nations development agenda”
2006	United Nations Climate Change Conference (Nairobi)
2007	United Nations Climate Change Conference (Bali)
2008	Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
2008	High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy
2009	United Nations Climate Change Conference (Copenhagen)
2009	High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation
2009	World Summit on Food Security (Rome)
2009	UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (Bonn)
2008-2010	G20 Summits held in Washington in 2008, London and Pittsburgh in 2009, and in Toronto and Seoul in 2010

Arab countries, along with China, India and several other large, rapidly growing developing countries, were less severely affected by the economic crisis than western countries. This reinforced an ongoing shift in global economic influence, with increasing opportunities for greater linkages between Arab economies and other major emerging economies. As part of the international action to restore economic stability, the G8 gave way to the G20 as the principal global body for financial management, whose membership includes one Arab country (Saudi Arabia) along with nine developing countries (Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Turkey and South Africa).

The financial crisis in the Arab region triggered financial, economic and social instability which had far reaching implications on macro-economic policies. The situation also prompted calls from a range of stakeholders in the public and private sectors and from civil society organizations to revisit the established development paradigm. This was echoed in socio-political movements spreading across the region, which also influence choices that governments will need to make in transitioning to a green economy – if that choice is to be made.

The combination of financial and political crises that bring such dramatic changes to the socio-economic environment can push countries to take decisive actions to redesign their development paradigm to incorporate greener economy concepts. This includes putting in place green finance and greener economic institutions to facilitate green investments and promote more environmentally friendly business practices in key developing sectors and technologies.

The 2008 crisis was also one of several contributory factors in a spike in world food prices, which triggered social unrest in many developing countries. This led to renewed interest in the agricultural aspects of sustainable development. These aspects include the availability of water and land, the value of ecosystem services, and potential conflicts between biodiversity, food production and attempts to tackle climate change through the use of biofuels.

Rising food prices caused primarily by rising demand in China and other rapidly growing developing countries were a significant factor in the Arab region's social upheavals of 2011. These events have given new emphasis to the social dimension of sustainable development, particularly in Arab countries, as well as to ongoing concerns for the environmental sustainability of the region's economic development path.

B. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

Arab countries share many similar concerns in relation to sustainable development, including peace and security, scarcity of water resources and water quality, desertification, land degradation, urbanization and unemployment. Differences in natural resource income between countries lead to variations in the levels of concern in areas such as energy policy, migration and poverty, but countries have nonetheless worked together extensively to examine and address sustainable development issues from a regional perspective. This resulted in a series of high-level agreements and initiatives which reinforced regional activities and the establishment of regional institutions and organizations (see table 3).

TABLE 3. REGIONAL DECLARATIONS/INITIATIVES ON ISSUES RELATED TO
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Year	Declaration or initiative
1986	Arab Declaration on Environment and Development
1991	Arab Statement on Environment and Development and the Future Outlook
1992	Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Development
2000	Declaration of the First International Symposium on the Environment From an Islamic Perspective
2001	Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Future of Environmental Action in the Arab World
2001	Oman Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development
2002	Arab Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development
2002	Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development
2002	Joint Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development by the African Ministerial Council on the Environment and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment
2002	Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development
2003	Abu Dhabi Declaration on Environment and Energy
2003	Abu Dhabi Initiative for Implementation of the Priority Activities for the Regional Action Programme in 2003–2008 (on combating desertification)
2005	Declaration of the Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative (the Dead Sea Declaration)
2006	Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development (from the Second Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers)
2007	Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change
2008	General Framework for Sustainable Development in the Islamic World (from the Third Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers)
2009	First Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit
2009	Arab Regional Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production
2010	Doha Declaration on Statistics in the Arab Region
2010	Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction
2011	Second Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit (Sharm El Sheikh)
1993-2011	Arab statements to Policy Sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Most of these regional commitments have been articulated under the auspices of the League of Arab States. The Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development, launched by the League of Arab States in 2002, represents an important first milestone for recognizing the concept of sustainable development in Arab countries. Its ambitious goal is to develop a regional programme for sustainable development based on priorities set out in the Initiative. Additionally, shared regional commitments with African countries were voiced in the 2002 Joint Ministerial Declaration issued by the African Ministerial Council on the Environment (AMCEN) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE).

Excerpts from these regional declarations and initiatives are highlighted in box 2.

Box 2. Excerpts from regional declarations and initiatives on sustainable development

(a) *Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development (League of Arab States – LAS) – 2002*

“This Initiative aims at addressing the challenges faced by Arab Countries to achieve sustainable development. It asserts the commitment of Arab countries to implement Agenda 21 and the development objectives included in the Millennium Declaration and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, taking into consideration the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. The Initiative seeks to enhance participation of Arab countries with the aim of strengthening their efforts in realizing sustainable development, particularly in light of globalization and its impacts, as well as finding a mechanism for financing the programmes for environmental protection and sustainable development”.

(b) *Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (LAS) – 2002*

“Achieving sustainable development requires the development of an integrated Pan Arab strategy that takes into account the historical and current conditions in the region and forecasts future changes and global developments with a view to achieving the following objectives: the establishment of peace and security...; curtailing poverty and unemployment; achieving balance between population growth and the available natural resources; eradicating illiteracy...; supporting and further strengthening development and environment institutions...; halting the degradation of natural resources and the environment...; development and integration of Arab production sectors and the adoption of cleaner production procedures; [and] supporting the private sector and the civil society, giving special attention to the role of women to ensure their participation in the implementation of sustainable development”.

(c) *Joint Ministerial Declaration by the African Ministerial Council on the Environment (AMCEN) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment and (CAMRE) – 2002*

“... escalating poverty and high population growth rates [are] key issues that will need to be addressed ... combating poverty represents a basic challenge to efforts of achieving sustainable development in the two regions. Addressing this issue requires the rational utilization of available resources and the encouragement of a conducive environment for investment at (the) national and regional levels. It will also require the identification of practical solutions for debt burden and strengthening of the role of the private sector and civil society, including youth and women, in achieving sustainable development”.

(d) *Abu Dhabi Declaration on Perspectives of Arab Environmental Action (CAMRE and LAS) – 2001*

“... accelerated development has had its impact on environment. This has raised of late, the issue of achieving the optimum linkage between development imperatives, eradicating poverty and protecting the environment. This has revealed several negative aspects... and in particular, the fact that development and raising living standards without concern for the environment resulted in intensive exploitation of natural resources and pollution levels beyond the capacity of nature to promote a healthy and safe environment conducive to achieving sustainable development fulfilling the aspiration of the Arab people. This calls for the adoption of more effective approaches in development based on rational use of natural resources, renewable and non-renewable, as well as their protection from pollution”.

(e) *Abu Dhabi Declaration on Environment and Energy (Arab Ministers responsible for environment and for energy affairs) – 2003*

The Declaration calls for “Reaffirmation of the right of the Arab countries to undertake the sustainable development of their natural resources ..., the industrialised countries to provide compensation with regard to the economic and social damage to and losses of the Arab countries whose economies depend primarily on oil and gas production and export revenues, such damage and losses arising as a result of the measures taken by these countries within the framework of the commitments of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ..., Reaffirmation of the importance of participation by Arab civil society in achieving goals aiming at achieving sustainability of the energy and natural resources sector ..., Promotion of the supply of energy to rural and remote areas in the Arab world and diversification of the sources of such energy”.

Box 2 (continued)

(f) *Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development (Second Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers) – 2006*

Ministers asserted their resolve to work towards: “Formulating a common, integrated Islamic strategy for sustainable development; Fostering the efforts of peace and security and raising awareness about their role in promoting sustainable development; Combating illiteracy, poverty and unemployment, and improving the quality of life for Muslim peoples; Improving and generalizing the level of health services; Developing educational services and supporting capacities in the field of education and transfer of technology; Supporting participation of women, the youth and civil society in Sustainable Development; Enlarging scope for democracy from an Islamic perspective as well as participation in decision-making; Preserving and rationalizing water resources, Preserving soil, land and biodiversity; Taking interest in the quality of air, energy and the impact of climate change; Encouraging production and sustainable consumption; Updating and enforcing special legislation”.

(g) *Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change – 2007 (CAMRE)*

Ministers declared their determination to strive to achieve: “The inclusion of policies to deal with climate change issues in all sectors within national and regional policies for sustainable development in a manner that harmonizes with sustained economic growth and efforts to eradicate poverty; Mitigation programs shall focus on: the production and use of cleaner fuels, improving the efficiency of energy use in all sectors, diversifying energy sources in accordance with the prevailing economic and social conditions, expanding the use of cleaner production techniques and environmental friendly technologies, as well as expanding the use of economic incentives to encourage more efficient products; Adaptation to measures that address climate change shall be fully consistent with the economic and social development and in such a way so as to achieve sustainable economic growth and eradication of poverty”.

(h) *Arab Regional Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production – 2009*

The strategy “highlights the priority action areas to achieve the objectives of alleviating poverty while using goods and services which use less natural resources specially energy and water; Energy for sustainable development, Water resources management, Waste management, Rural development and eradication of poverty, Education and sustainable lifestyles, Sustainable tourism”. It sets out objectives and recommended policies in each of these areas.

(i) *Arab Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction – 2010*

The strategy has a two-fold purpose: to “outline a vision, strategic priorities and core areas of implementation for disaster risk reduction in the Arab region” and to “enhance institutional and coordination mechanisms, and monitoring arrangements to support the implementation of the Strategy at the regional, national and local level through preparation of a Programme of Action”. It recognizes the increasing risk and frequency of disasters that challenge the development process and aims to reduce the consequent cost, loss of lives, and the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries across the Arab region. It identifies five key priorities to address disaster risk reduction efforts in the region: 1) Strengthen commitment for comprehensive disaster risk reduction across sectors; 2) Develop capacities to identify, assess and monitor disaster risks; 3) Build resilience through knowledge, advocacy, research and trainings; 4) Improve accountability for disaster risk management at the sub national and local level; and 5) Integrate disaster risk reduction into emergency response, preparedness and recovery.

Table 4 catalogues and compares the content of six regional declarations that cover all three dimensions of sustainable development. Most of these include references to institution-building, capacity-building, management of natural resources, technology transfer and participatory approaches to sustainable development, particularly with regard to women and youth. The Arab Declaration to the WSSD in 2002 and the associated Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development are particularly broad, covering most of the topics included in the conference agenda. However, actions to implement them have been relatively limited, and the scope of subsequent declarations has been narrowed.

Many of these regional platforms have emphasized support for integrating social, economic and environmental goals. However, many of the regional forums addressing sustainable development are attended exclusively by representatives from the Ministries of Environment or related agencies. In consequence, action programmes resulting from these regional declarations and initiatives are primarily restricted to environmental matters.

TABLE 4. REGIONAL COMMITMENTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Priority areas	Arab Statement on Env. and Dev. and the Future Outlook (1991)	Regional Action Programme for Sust. Dev. (1992)	Abu Dhabi Declaration on Perspectives of Arab Env. Action (2001)	Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sust. Dev. (2002)	Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development (2002)	Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development (2006)	Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (2007)
Poverty alleviation			x	x	x	x	x
Poverty related to lack of education and disease	x					x	
Eradicating illiteracy				x	x	x	
Unemployment and social security				x		x	
Governance institutions	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Planning	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Legislation	x	x		x	x	x	
National institutions				x	x	x	
Legal issues and instruments							
Precautionary approach	x		x				
Monitoring and evaluation	x	x		x			x
Economic issues and instruments							
Polluter pays principle	x						
Economic valuation			x				

TABLE 4 (continued)

Priority areas	Arab Statement on Env. and Dev. and the Future Outlook (1991)	Regional Action Programme for Sust. Dev. (1992)	Abu Dhabi Declaration on Perspectives of Arab Env. Action (2001)	Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sust. Dev. (2002)	Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development (2002)	Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development (2006)	Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (2007)
Economic and environmental policies				x			
Globalization			x	x	x		
International trade and trade liberalization			x	x	x		
Economic integration and intra-Arab trade				x			
Industrial development	x	x					
Embargos				x			
International cooperation	x	x	x	x	x		
Relationship between the Arabs, international community and the United Nations	x			x	x		
Multilateral environmental agreements				x	x		x
Capacity-building			x	x	x	x	x
Education and developing human resources	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Media and building awareness	x	x	x	x	x		x
Science, technology, research and development	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Clean production	x		x	x	x	x	x

TABLE 4 (continued)

Priority areas	Arab Statement on Env. and Dev. and the Future Outlook (1991)	Regional Action Programme for Sust. Dev. (1992)	Abu Dhabi Declaration on Perspectives of Arab Env. Action (2001)	Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sust. Dev. (2002)	Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development (2002)	Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development (2006)	Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (2007)
Public participation	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Women	x		x	x		x	
Young people				x		x	
Private sector and non- governmental organizations				x	x	x	x
Production and consumption	x		x	x	x		
Natural and human Resources			x		x		x
Water	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Energy	x					x	x
Land resources		x	x		x	x	
Desertification	x	x		x	x	x	
Biodiversity and ecosystems	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Marine resources	x	x	x		x	x	
Urbanization and human settlements		x	x	x	x		
Population policies and family planning	x			x	x		

TABLE 4 (continued)

Priority areas	Arab Statement on Env. and Dev. and the Future Outlook (1991)	Regional Action Programme for Sust. Dev. (1992)	Abu Dhabi Declaration on Perspectives of Arab Env. Action (2001)	Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sust. Dev. (2002)	Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development (2002)	Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development (2006)	Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (2007)
Development of nomadic areas		x					
Heritage and rare natural resources	x	x		x			
Safe water, food and chemicals				x	x	x	
Financing	x		x	x	x		x
Debt burden				x			
Investment				x	x		
Arab/Islamic funds and international aid				x	x		x
Technology transfer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Peace and security				x	x	x	
Weapons of mass destruction and nuclear safety				x			
Wars, armed conflicts and tensions	x					x	
United Nations resolutions on Palestine	x			x	x	x	

C. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

1. *Policy integration*

The most fundamental challenge faced in establishing effective institutional structures for sustainable development in the Arab region continues to be the difficulty of integrating economic, social and environmental issues in development decision-making. The goal has been articulated and reiterated in numerous regional declarations, but setting goals and priorities has been limited. Issues are often listed in a way that lacks a practical means of implementation. Furthermore, national goals and priorities are often premised on national security, economic growth and cultural preservation rather than on the sustainability of national and regional development. Effective platforms on sustainable development need to build on the interdependence of short-term and long-term national and regional interests, and identify realistic priorities for action.

These difficulties in integration can be partially attributed to the fundamental nature of government in all countries, whereby authority must be delegated to individual government departments, with each taking full responsibility for its own decision-making. In exercising its authority, each department resists what might be regarded as interference from other departments. Moreover, governments and the public at-large continue to associate sustainable development with 'environmental issues', resulting in a lack of awareness and misunderstanding of what sustainable development actually is. This can apply to environmental authorities as much as it does to other authorities in that officials may regard sustainable development as their own area of responsibility and resist extending the mandate for sustainable development to other institutions for fear of marginalizing their own authority. The extent to which this barrier to integration has been overcome in other countries has generally been achieved through specific cross-disciplinary requirements imposed at the Prime Ministerial or Presidential level. Most Arab countries have been slow in responding to the need for such measures.

2. *Emerging concepts and issues influencing the development of institutions for sustainable development in the Arab region*

As noted above, several new concepts and issues related to sustainable development have recently emerged. These include the escalation of climate change as a major priority, the threat of rising food prices, the global economic crisis, the growing influence of emerging economies and the potential for a transition to a green economy.

(a) *Climate change*

Climate change presents particular challenges for Arab countries in view of the region's role as a major global supplier of fossil fuels. In countries where the life of the resource is short, initial actions have already been taken to diversify their economies. However, smaller incentives are offered in countries whose resources are expected to last for many decades. The major Arab supplying countries have exercised impressive global responsibility in limiting supply when necessary for maintaining price stability, but the major consuming countries are much less welcoming of any similar action in response to climate change. The developed countries' own actions to reduce their demand have fallen short of what would be needed to contain climate change within globally accepted targets. Nonetheless, economic diversification across the whole region offers the potential for considerable economic and social benefits, irrespective of the life of the resource. The biggest challenge in implementing a fully effective economic diversification programme lies not in achieving desired levels of economic growth or wealth, but in restructuring the principal sources of that wealth.

Meanwhile, the recognition that efforts to contain climate change are unlikely to prevent serious adverse effects presents a serious challenge to the region in adapting to those effects. Rainfall is expected to decrease, particularly in the Mediterranean part of the region, aggravating a shortage of water resources that

is already serious. The Mediterranean countries are also likely to be the most affected by rising sea levels, with serious threats to large populations in coastal cities. This will be exacerbated by increasing frequencies and intensities of floods and droughts. The combination of water shortages, rising temperatures and extreme climatic events is expected to reduce agricultural productivity and threaten food security. All of these threats add extra urgency to the need for institutional reforms in the area of sustainable development planning and implementation.

(b) *Food security*

The food security aspects of this challenge will be further aggravated by an expected ongoing increase in world food prices² driven mainly by rising demand in East and South Asia. Since many Arab countries are already highly dependent on food imports, a major effort will be needed to accommodate this demand. Despite the region's limited water resources and the fact that an increase in agriculture production and productivity is expensive and not sustainable for countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (except Saudi Arabia), the challenge of achieving a sufficient increase in the region's own agricultural productivity and food production is not insurmountable, but is likely to be dependent on integrated strategic planning of the highest calibre.

(c) *Financial crisis*

The global economic crisis of 2008 has had mixed effects in the region, varying between countries. Financial markets in most Arab countries are relatively insulated from those in the countries at the centre of the crisis, and thus did not suffer a major contagion. Nonetheless Arab investors made significant losses and the construction sector experienced a marked decline. A sharp decrease in oil prices occurred, but this has been countered by subsequent rises. By contrast, a decline in tourism into the region has been aggravated by the effect of the region's subsequent political upheavals. The sovereign wealth funds of oil-exporting Arab countries fell in overall value through exposure to financial markets in the crisis countries. However, the developed countries' need to finance their rising debt created new opportunities for acquisitions and investments in the real economy. The sovereign wealth funds of Arab countries have in general taken less advantage of these opportunities for outward investment into industrialized economies in favour of those in other regions, particularly in China and India.

The rapid economic growth of China, India and other large emerging economies has stimulated a rising interest in the Arab countries' energy resources. As a consequence, China and the League of Arab States have formed a joint cooperation forum with an action plan that includes deeper cooperation in renewable and alternative energy sources, as well as petroleum and natural gas. Other areas of cooperation covered by the plan include investment promotion, science and technology, and environmental protection. Through such developments, the Arab region as a whole is likely to be presented with growing opportunities to reorient its development path and enhance its own long-term sustainability in an increasingly multipolar world.

(d) *Green economy*

Worldwide interest in the transition to a green economy has created other opportunities for Arab countries. The climate in the region is ideal for the generation of solar electricity and is also very well suited to the efficient production of wind power. As well as offering renewable sources for domestic energy needs, these innovations give the region a new, high-potential source of foreign income primarily from electricity export to Europe, and, more significantly, an important comparative advantage in the development of associated technologies. In addition, the region's limited water resources give it similar advantages in the development of technologies associated with water-efficient agriculture and desalination. If Arab countries

² Other factors behind the global price increase include a rise in energy prices, biofuel manufacture, investor speculation, greater concentration of production among fewer suppliers and stagnation in production.

can rise to the challenge of diversifying their economies rapidly enough, the region has the opportunity to become a world leader in an expanding global market for green economy products and services.

It is important to stress that, as a consequence of these new and emerging issues, when institutional stakeholders such as the Ministries of Finance or the Ministries of Planning are involved in the financing of Environmental Impact Assessments or in the planning of public investment in critical sectors, they start to play a key role in the IFSD.

3. The link between science, education, and policy

The need for economic diversification and major improvements in agricultural productivity in Arab countries are both dependent on developing the necessary capabilities in science and technology. In past decades, the Arab region has lagged well behind other regions in this respect, particularly East Asia, but increasingly also compared to parts of South Asia and South America. This necessitates a reorientation of science and technology policy and associated educational policies, learning in particular from notable success stories in other regions.

The Republic of Korea's remarkable success may be particularly relevant for the Arab countries. This began with close cooperation between the public and private sectors in undertaking in-depth research into which sectors might lead the country's industrial expansion in the face of intense international competition.³ This revealed that the range of realistic options was extremely small. Specific industries were then targeted in an evolving series of strategic development plans which steered capital investment, research and development, and education and training programmes towards the particular needs of those industries. In parallel, close links were established between urban and rural development through a combination of land reforms and incentives for the establishment of economically viable feeder industries in rural areas. The country thereby achieved rapid modernization of both the manufacturing industry and agriculture at the same time without the high levels of unemployment that have plagued Arab countries.

Arab countries may also learn from Brazil's success in developing its agricultural sector to become one of the most highly competitive countries in the world. The two regions are very different in their climatic and soil conditions, but in a sense similar in that these are highly specific to their own localities. The Brazilian success has been attributed to a combination of factors, all of which were heavily dependent on public investment in agricultural research and extension.⁴ These included scientific research in tropical agriculture, the availability of agricultural credit and the development of technologies that enabled expansion into regions with previously unproductive soil conditions.

Interventionist strategies of this nature have been actively discouraged by international agencies promoting the Washington Consensus model of development, which reinforces a country's natural inclination to rely on existing comparative advantages, such as the extraction of natural resources, and help to protect the developed countries' own comparative advantage in high technology products and services. The task of devising and implementing their own development strategies suited to their own long-term goals is yet another challenge for the Arab countries.

4. Current political developments in the Arab region

The political upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and other Arab countries have major implications for the region's future development path. Rio+20 presents a timely opportunity for the region to redefine itself to the rest of the world, and also to itself.

³ Hyung-Sup Choi, "Technology for Development: The South Korean Experience", in *Mobilizing Technology for World Development*, J. Ramesh and C. Weiss, eds. (New York, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1979).

⁴ F.R. Chaddad and M.S. Jank, "The Evolution of Agricultural Policies and Agribusiness Development in Brazil", *Choices*, 21(2), American Agricultural Economics Association (2006), pp. 85-90.

The most immediate impact of the upheavals for the implementation of sustainable development was to bring the social dimension to the fore. All governments in the region now have a greatly enhanced awareness of the need to respond to social issues at the heart of sustainable development. In particular, Arab countries will need to double their efforts to tackle youth unemployment. For this to succeed they will have to pay serious attention to the issue of economic diversification.

In formulating their response to the political developments in the region, all governments - those that have been newly established, those that have been restructured and those that remain broadly unchanged are all faced with the task of developing a proud vision of their country's future that can inspire their people in common endeavour. The social dimension of sustainable development is at the heart of this, but the environmental dimension must also play a central role. In order to inspire, the region's vision of itself must be sustainable.

Regional declarations on sustainable development that have been presented at previous conferences, both in the region and internationally, have often expressed ambitious goals with little concrete action in support of them. The current political situation presents both the opportunity and the need to go beyond that.

II. THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. REVIEW OF CHANGES AND CURRENT TRANSFORMATIONS

Since the previous review which was published in 2003, the IFSD has continued to evolve both regionally and in individual Arab countries. Numerous institutions have been established at the regional, national and local levels covering each of the three dimensions of sustainable development separately. The present review focuses on the institutional framework for integrating environmental governance into economic and social development planning.

National focal points and other expert stakeholders were consulted as part of the current review to provide information and opinions on current institutional structures and their effectiveness. Contributions from stakeholders have been combined with a review of published information to examine recent changes at the national, local and regional levels. These changes are discussed in the following sections in the context of earlier developments.

1. *At the national and local level*

(a) *At the national level*

Institutional arrangements for environmental management in most Arab countries have been subject to periodic structural changes since the 1970s, when the prime focus was on environmental protection. Periodic structural changes are still the norm in some of the countries, but in most cases the responsibilities of environmental authorities have become broader.

Most governments in the region initially chose to establish environmental committees and councils instead of ministries. These were often cross-sectoral and addressed issues ranging from water quality to the preservation of wildlife. In many cases the Ministries of Health tended to be the dominant players in inter-ministerial councils and committees until the 1990s.

Preparations for the Earth Summit in 1992 and the WSSD in 2002 stimulated a general trend towards increasing the status of environmental authorities, often through the creation of Ministries of State and self-standing Ministries of Environment. In many cases, responsibility for the environment has been incorporated into another ministry with its own environment-related responsibilities, such as urban planning, rural development, water or natural resources. More recently, as the concept of sustainable development is becoming more widely accepted, there has been a trend in some Arab countries to combine environment with sustainable development or other key issues such as climate change, although the additional responsibilities associated with this are often limited.

(i) *National Councils for Sustainable Development*

In parallel with establishing government departments responsible for environmental matters, several Arab countries created some form of a National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD), particularly to fulfil the reporting requirements established at the Earth Summit in 1992 or in preparation for the WSSD in 2002. Within that context, Lebanon created an Inter-Ministerial Council for Sustainable Development and the Syrian Arab Republic established an Environment Protection Council. Similar councils were set up in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Yemen, typically comprising representatives from various ministries responsible for the economy, the environment and foreign affairs, and sometimes also including non-governmental experts. However, these institutions tended to be ad hoc in nature and were often made operational only to prepare for international conferences or respond to their reporting requirements. The stakeholder survey conducted as a part of the current review indicated that in most countries, the council had either ceased to exist or had little influence. There was only one case in which the council considered to have medium influence, and in no cases was its influence considered to be high.

Under these circumstances, NCSDs in the Arab region are rarely able or rarely mandated to coordinate the integration or implementation of a full set of sustainable development policies. In their current capacity, most of the councils that are still functional are ill-equipped to serve as permanent institutional inter-ministerial organs able to support intersectoral policy coordination.

(ii) *Institutional structure of environmental authorities*

In general terms environmental authorities in the Arab region may be categorized into six broad types, as shown in table 5.

TABLE 5. CATEGORIZATION OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITIES

Type of environmental authority	Country	Current environmental authority
Inter-ministerial environmental council	Kuwait	Environmental Public Authority
Environmental directorate within line ministry	Saudi Arabia	General Presidency of Meteorology and Environment Protection
Combined ministry	Algeria	Ministry of Regional Planning and Environment
	Comoros	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment, Energy, Industry and Craft
	Djibouti	Ministry of Home, Urbanism, Environment and Land Planning
	Morocco	Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment
	Somalia	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Environment
	The Sudan	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
	United Arab Emirates	Ministry of Environment and Water
Semi-independent environmental agency	Yemen	Ministry of Tourism and Environment
	Bahrain	Public Commission for Protection Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife
	Egypt	Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency
Autonomous Ministry of the Environment	Palestine	Environmental Quality Authority
	Iraq	Ministry of Environment
	Jordan	Ministry of Environment
	Lebanon	Ministry of Environment
	Qatar	Ministry of Environment
	Libya	People's Committee for Health and Environment
Autonomous Ministry of the Environment with additional responsibilities for sustainable development	Syrian Arab Republic	State Ministry of Environment
	Tunisia	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
	Mauritania	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
	Oman	Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs

- a. Inter-ministerial environmental councils with environmental secretariats (Kuwait) – These are inter-ministerial bodies with technical secretariats that take action on specific decisions endorsed by the council;

Kuwait	Environmental Public Authority
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- b. Environmental directorates within line ministries (Saudi Arabia) - typically, an environmental directorate is an agency or department within a ministry;

Saudi Arabia	General Presidency of Meteorology and Environment Protection
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- c. Combined ministries (Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Morocco, Somalia, The Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Yemen) - in these cases, responsibility for environmental matters is included in the mandate of a larger ministry that is responsible for a related area of government policy, such as tourism, water resources or planning. In Morocco, a single ministry is responsible for land-use planning, water and environmental matters, reflecting a high degree of synergy between these three areas. In the Sudan, environmental responsibility was originally included within tourism, but was subsequently moved to natural resources. This reflects a shift in priorities with regard to the relative importance of environmental issues in these two sectors.

Algeria	Ministry of Regional Planning and Environment
Comoros	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment, Energy, Industry, & Craft
Djibouti	Ministry of Home, Urbanism, Environment and Land Planning
Morocco	Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment
Somalia	Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment
The Sudan	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
United Arab Emirates	Ministry of Environment and Water
Yemen	Ministry of Tourism and Environment

- d. Semi-independent environmental agencies (Bahrain, Egypt, Palestine) – The environmental agency may have its own Minister of State, but is usually represented in the Council of Ministers by the Minister of an associated line ministry;

Bahrain	Public Commission for Protection Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife
Egypt	Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency
Palestine	Environmental Quality Authority

- e. Autonomous Ministries of the Environment or their equivalent (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Libya, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia) – Ministries of the Environment are autonomous institutions with their own technical staff, budget allocation and the mandate to implement actions. While ministries are legally empowered with the status of other line ministries, in practice they tend to be politically weaker compared to economic and sectoral ministries;

Iraq	Ministry of Environment
Jordan	Ministry of Environment
Lebanon	Ministry of Environment
Qatar	Ministry of Environment
Libya	People's Committee for Health and Environment
Syrian Arab Republic	State Ministry of Environment

- f. Autonomous Ministries of the Environment with additional responsibilities for sustainable development (Mauritania, Oman and Tunisia).

Tunisia	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
Mauritania	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
Oman	Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs

(iii) *Upgrading of environmental authorities*

Since the publication of the previous review, environmental authorities of several Arab countries have been upgraded to full Ministerial status. Ministries of Environment have been established in Iraq (2003), Qatar (2008) and the Syrian Arab Republic (2009). In Tunisia and Mauritania additional responsibilities were included, creating Ministries of Environment and Sustainable Development in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

In Oman, the particular significance of climate change has been recognized by the creation of a Ministry of Environment and Climatic Affairs in 2007. The Ministry's climate-related responsibilities include awareness-raising, monitoring and evaluating climate change in coordination with the other concerned authorities, contributing to data gathering and the development of research agendas, and participation in international and regional conferences concerned with the environment and climate.

(iv) *Integrated planning for sustainable development*

The results of the stakeholder survey indicate that, in most Arab countries, responsibilities for sustainable development are spread across a wide range of ministries, including environment, planning, health, water resources, energy, agriculture, fishery, forests and tourism. The lead role most commonly rests with Ministries of Environment or Ministries of Planning. Institutional arrangements for integration between government authorities were considered as weak in most countries and in others were non-existent. In some Arab countries, there is a high level of civil society activity on sustainable development issues, including by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and also in the private sector. In most cases, however, institutional structures for civil society involvement in decision-making were considered to be weak.

Tunisia's approach to integrated planning for sustainable development as an example of good practice was also highlighted in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) study.⁵ With regard to the current transitional government structures in Tunisia there is some uncertainty over the future of these arrangements, but nonetheless, the country's experience with its National Commission for Sustainable Development (Commission Nationale de Développement Durable – CNDD) and associated planning processes offers a potentially important model for the wider Arab region (see box 3).

Box 3. Commission Nationale de Développement Durable in Tunisia

Tunisia established its National Commission for Sustainable Development (Commission Nationale de Développement Durable - CNDD) in the wake of the Earth Summit in 1992, with the principal objective of coordinating between various national development actors. The aim was to reconcile economic and social development with the preservation of natural resources. The Commission was established in October 1993, two years after the creation of the Ministry of Environment and Land Use Planning, which was subsequently replaced by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

The CNDD is composed of the following members:

- (a) Prime Minister of Tunisia (Chairman);
- (b) Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development (Vice-Chairman);
- (c) Other concerned Ministers;
- (d) Representatives from Parliament;
- (e) Representatives from professional organizations and trade unions;
- (f) Representatives from the National Women's Union;
- (g) Representatives from NGOs active in the areas of environment and development;
- (h) Rapporteur of the National Environmental Protection Agency.

The CNDD aims at the following:

- (a) Adopting and implementing a national strategy and plan of action for sustainable development;
- (b) Integrating environmental issues into sectoral strategies and development plans;
- (c) Preserving the rights of future generations to a healthy environment;
- (d) Ending ecologically unsustainable production and consumption patterns;
- (e) Achieving self-sufficiency and food security;
- (f) Guaranteeing the rational use of natural resources, particularly water resources;

⁵ UNECA, *National Strategies for Sustainable Development in Africa: A Sixteen-Country Assessment* (Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, 2011).

Box 3 (*continued*)

- (g) Proposing regulations to curb pollution;
- (h) Reinforcing institutional structures and procedures to provide for the full integration of environmental and development issues at all levels of the decision-making process;
- (i) Providing for the participation of local communities, communal groups and other local, regional and national organizations in the decision-making process;
- (j) Developing an ecological accounting system based on new indicators of development; and
- (k) Engaging in key issues including combating desertification, developing new sources of renewable energy, conserving biodiversity and ecosystems, and transferring environmentally-sound technologies.

CNDD is assisted by a Technical Committee for Sustainable Development, which is chaired by the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development and comprises officers in charge of environmental affairs within other concerned ministries and organizations. Representatives from academic institutions and NGOs serve as non-permanent members on this Committee. In effect, the Technical Committee has the same membership as CNDD, but on an expert level rather than a ministerial level.

A number of subsidiary bodies review specific development issues according to their respective expertise. At a sectoral level, these include committees to investigate such fields as agriculture and industry. Other bodies formed as national committees include the National Committee to Combat Desertification and the National Committee on Biodiversity and Biosecurity. The work of these committees is subsequently examined by the Technical Committee, which can submit recommendations to CNDD for review and adoption.

The CNDD was established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Tunisia, consisting of ministers concerned with sustainable development, members of Parliament, chairpersons of national professional organizations, and representatives of women, children and NGOs. It played a central role in developing Tunisia's National Action Plan for Environment and Sustainable Development (National Agenda 21) using a participatory process that involved more than 60 stakeholder meetings and workshops at national and local levels. The National Agenda 21 was adopted prior to the preparation of the country's ninth Social and Economic Development Plan (1997-2001), which incorporated the principles of sustainable development and identified priority measures and actions for sustainable development. A chapter of the subsequent tenth five-year plan (2002-2006) was devoted to the promotion of development actions based on sustainability principles. In 2005, the CNDD developed a Tunisian common vision for sustainable development as the basis for the concrete programmes incorporated in the country's eleventh five-year plan (2007-2016). In 2006 a General Directorate for Sustainable Development was established within the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, charged with coordinating the process of going beyond the National Agenda 21 to prepare a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS). The intention is that this will give prominence to integrating environmental and social issues into the development process, targeting key economic sectors.

Egypt's experience in strengthening the IFSD can be summarized with the formation of the National Commission on Sustainable Development and the creation of the Technical Secretariat for Sustainable Development. The Technical Secretariat included representatives of ministries and agencies represented on the National Commission. The general framework of the national strategy for sustainable development was prepared in concerted efforts of all ministries and agencies represented on the National Committee and the Technical Secretariat.

Saudi Arabia's Eighth Plan for Sustainable Development covering the period 2005-2009 contained an entire chapter on sustainable development. The Plan included a national policy to achieve sustainable development by aligning activities with the protection, promotion and preservation of the base of natural resources, the preservation of non-renewable resources, and the search for alternative or additional resources. Saudi Arabia is also experiencing progress in other areas of the IFSD, such as the creation of legislative institutions, the development of policies, and the creation of the Environment Council and the National

Commission on Sustainable Development. Recently policymakers have discussed the idea of creating an Agency for Sustainable Development and addressed its organizational structure and all the state departments and public sectors that would be engaged with it to achieve economic, environmental and social integration in the country.

In 2003, Yemen established the Ministry of Water and Environment and the State Authority for Environmental Protection, whose membership consists of the representatives of all relevant ministries and sectors. Moreover, a National Commission for Environment and Trade was created within the Ministry of Water and the Environment and includes all the stakeholders from the public and private sectors as well as civil society organizations.

Morocco's most significant achievement in the context of sustainable development was the April 2010 formulation of the National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development with an Action Plan emanating from the national strategy for the environment sector. Moreover, the creation of regional observatories for the environment and sustainable development, in addition to the implementation of several national programmes, promote the integration of the economic, social and the environment sectors.

Oman has also progressed in the field of sustainable development by creating a National Strategy for Environment Protection in 1996 and a series of bodies involved in sustainable development, such as the National Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Indicators Committee.

Moreover, important steps have been taken to develop scientific institutions like the Centre for Environmental Studies and Research at Sultan Qaboos University, a Scientific Research Council, and a Specialized Environmental Research Centre created to promote and coordinate environmental studies and research in the country.

(v) Common functions of environmental institutions

While the scope of issues included in the sustainable development paradigm has widened, the mandate of environmental institutions in the Arab region has in some cases remained relatively constant. Typically, environmental institutions in Arab countries are responsible for planning and coordinating environmental policies, formulating environmental regulations and standards, assessing, monitoring and inspecting environmental quality, engaging with multilateral environmental agreements, and raising awareness and promoting education on environmental issues.

Given their role in relation to sustainable development, environmental institutions in the Arab region are typically required to report on their activities and support negotiation at international forums, usually in close collaboration with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. In addition, the Ministries of Planning in some Arab countries may be involved in authorizing funding for specific activities in the area of sustainable development.

(vi) Common achievements and limitations of environmental institutions

Environmental institutions have been progressively strengthened in many Arab countries which has resulted in significant improvements in environmental management. Their achievements include enacting environmental decrees, regulations and standards, strengthening capacity to formulate environmental strategies and action plans, enhancing technical capacity for data collection and monitoring, improving environmental awareness and education programmes, and providing a greater understanding of global environmental issues.

Despite this substantial progress, improvements have generally remained within the domain of environmental management with limited ability to fully address all three dimensions of sustainable development. The main limitations identified by the stakeholder survey include; a lack of comprehensive national planning, limited engagement of stakeholders, lack of technical capacity, poor coordination, lack of

follow-up and limited transparency. Slow but steady progress was reported for some countries, but with much remaining to be done.

(b) *At the local level*

Subnational government institutions in Arab countries typically address all three dimensions of sustainable development insofar as they relate to the traditional aspects of local government, such as water supply, sanitation, waste disposal and urban planning. In some of the countries, such as Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, the national environmental authority operates locally through decentralized structures with local offices. Most others are more highly centralized and deal with the wider issues of sustainable development through a top-down approach.

In the wake of the Earth Summit in 1992, many Local Agenda 21 initiatives were launched, mainly with funding from international organizations. These included the Localizing Agenda 21 (LA 21) programme of UN-HABITAT, the Sustainable Cities Programme of UN-HABITAT and UNEP, the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) programme of the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Urban Management Programme of UN-HABITAT, UNDP and the World Bank. The LA 21 programme supported many local projects in Morocco, beginning with an initial demonstration project in Essaouira and extending to another six cities/localities.⁶ The stakeholder survey identified Morocco as an example where national and local platforms for Agenda 21 remain effective.

The LA 21 programme in Tunisia has been relatively independent of support from international organizations. It was driven by the country's own National Agenda 21 and covered about 100 cities and rural communities.⁷ The National Agenda 21 also included the development of regional programmes on environment for sustainable development, based on regional indicators for the improvement of living conditions.

Many Local Agenda 21 initiatives in other Arab countries have had positive impacts in areas such as gender equality and the greater self-reliance of local people, and have had an empowering effect on local NGOs.⁸ However, those that have been dependent on international funding tended to have little influence beyond the duration of the project. Few of them have been able to achieve institutional sustainability or influence the overall institutional structure of environmental planning and management at the local level.

2. *At the regional level*

(a) *Interdisciplinary*

Respondents to the stakeholder survey indicated that many regional environmental institutions played an important role in supporting sustainable development initiatives in Arab countries. Several of these institutions were created in the 1970s and 1980s, including CAMRE by the League of Arab States in 1987, which provided the first political forum for addressing environmental issues in the region (see box 4). Two bodies focusing on the environment and development were established in the 1990s, the Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), a non-governmental think tank, and the Joint Committee for Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), which was established under the auspices of the Arab League as an inter-ministerial advisory committee to CAMRE. JCEDAR is a technical preparatory body serving as part of the joint secretariat of CAMRE and is composed of the heads of the national environmental affairs agencies, Arab specialized agencies, NGOs, private sector bodies, regional organizations, ESCWA and UNEP/ROWA.

⁶ UN-HABITAT, *Localizing Agenda 21*. Available from <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/programmes/agenda21/projects.asp>.

⁷ UNECA, *National Strategies for Sustainable Development in Africa: A Sixteen-Country Assessment* (Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, 2011).

⁸ O.S. Salem, "Arab States Local Agenda 21: Attempts and Challenges", in *Sustainable Urbanisation: Bridging the Green and Brown Agendas*, A. Allen and N. You, eds. (Development Planning Unit, University College London, 2002).

**Box 4. Emergence of regional organizations supporting sustainable development
in the Arab region**

1. *Establishment of select regional, economic and social development institutions (1960s-1970s)*
 - 1970 Arab League Council of Arab Health Ministers
 - 1972 Arab Planning Institute (API)
 - 1973 Islamic Development Bank (IDB) (established 1973, opened 1975)
 - 1974 Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) (established 1968, opened 1974)
 - 1973 Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) (dissolved to become the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in 1985)
2. *Establishment of select developments of regional environmental institutions (1970s-1990s)*
 - 1971 Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD)
 - 1975 UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP)
 - 1977 International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)
 - 1978 Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME)
 - 1984 Bahrain Center for Studies and Research (BCSR)
 - 1985 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
 - 1987 Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE)
 - 1996 Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC)
 - 1996 Center for the Affairs of Man and the Environment (CAME)
 - 1996 Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA)
3. *Gradual emergence of regional sustainable development institutions (1990s-2000s)*
 - 1990 Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) was established to engage Arab civil society organizations in the Rio summit process. RAED opened the door to NGOs to attend the CAMRE meetings after obtaining observer status in LAS in 1995
 - 1992 Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) (Proposed for establishment by CAMRE in 1992, opened in 1993)
 - 1993 Joint Committee for Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR)
 - 1993 Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity
 - 1997 Arab NGO Network
 - 2001 A Joint Technical Secretariat (comprised of the LAS secretariat, ESCWA and UNEP/ROWA) was established to prepare for WSSD and follow up on the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region
 - 2006 Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED, regional NGO)
 - 2006 Horizon 2020 Initiative on de-pollution of the Mediterranean, by the European Commission in partnership with Arab Mediterranean countries
 - 2007 Arab Environment Facility (AEF), adopted by CAMRE
 - 2008 United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Groups on Climate Change, Food Security and the Millennium Development Goals
 - 2008 Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC)
 - 2009 Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), a regional association of water operators (public and private), but considered an NGO

ESCWA was established in 1985, expanding upon the responsibilities of the former Economic Commission. ESCWA is able to draw on funding from the United Nations and other sources to provide a regional centre of extensive expertise and knowledge, an information observatory and support for the formulation and harmonization of member countries' sectoral policies. ESCWA activities are closely coordinated with other international and regional organizations, including the League of Arab States and its subsidiary bodies. It has provided technical expertise for numerous activities undertaken under the auspices of CAMRE and JCEDAR.

An ESCWA-led Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) has also been established to support regional coordination and coherence in the region and the Thematic Working Groups on Climate Change, Food Security and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, the RCM was established to hold regular inter-agency meetings in each of the five regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia) with a view to improving coordination among the work programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system in each region. The UN Deputy Secretary-General launched and chaired the first meetings in 1999 and ESCWA Executive Secretaries have chaired the meetings since 2000.

In December 2000, the decision taken by the United Nations General Assembly to launch a 10-year review of progress since the Earth Summit in 1992 underlined the need for regional coordination among Arab Member States. In 2001, a joint secretariat encompassing ESCWA, the League of Arab States and UNEP/ROWA was formed to coordinate regional preparations for WSSD. This joint secretariat organized a number of events at a regional level, including a high-level thematic roundtable, regional forums for NGOs, industry representatives, members of Parliament and regional stakeholders, a joint meeting of AMCEN and CAMRE, and the Regional PrepCom for West Asia. Additionally, in the wake of WSSD, the joint secretariat and the League of Arab States have collaborated to establish a regional programme for sustainable development for the Arab region.

Several United Nations organizations working in Arab countries have been active in supporting the development of NSDSs. In 2004, a three-day capacity-development workshop was hosted in Cairo by the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development and was attended by representatives from Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, The Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the League of Arab States. Several of the Arab countries have received dedicated assistance from UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan and UNDP for the development of their national strategy, including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Tunisia.

A Regional Center for Disaster Risk Reduction was established in 2010 in response to the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015), which was adopted by JCEDAR/CAMRE in 2005 and supported by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction through a consultative process involving specialized agencies that are members of JCEDAR.

An important development took place with the creation of the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED). AFED was officially established in Beirut on 17 June 2006 at the conclusion of a regional conference on public opinion and the environment organized by *Al-Bia Wal-Tanmia* (Environment & Development) magazine. The initiative, which started in 2001 as an informal gathering of the magazine's region-wide readers, was established as a regional organization on the occasion of its tenth anniversary. It is a regional NGO which receives substantial funding from, inter alia, the OPEC Fund for International Development. Its work programme includes the preparation of independent periodic reports on the state of the environment in Arab countries. The organization has issued three major reports to date, covering future challenges for sustainable development in the Arab region, the impact of climate change, and the sustainable management of water. The 2011 AFED report focuses on the Arab Green Economy, covering green economy investment in water, agriculture, energy, transport, industry, cities and green buildings, tourism and waste management.

The year 2006 also saw the launch of the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Initiative on depollution of the Mediterranean, which provides substantial funding for cooperative programmes between the European Union and Arab Mediterranean countries.

In 2007 CAMRE initiated the establishment of the Arab Environment Facility (AEF), which was another important development. This is a framework initiative whose primary purpose is to attract financial resources for environmental programmes and projects that improve sustainable ecological development throughout the Arab Region and enhance private sector investment in the environment. The establishment of the AEF is currently under negotiation.

(b) *Select sectors: energy and water*

Looking at its natural landscape and natural resources, the Arab region is considered peculiar with regard to sustainable development. Scarcity of resources, land degradation, and depletion and availability of productive inputs form a set of obstacles on the path to sustainable development. This is the reason this section is devoted to analysing the energy and water sectors, which represent a pillar in the sustainable development strategy in the Arab region. What are the main institutions for sustainable development in the region for energy and water? What is their role and what is their impact?

(i) *Energy*

- a. ESCWA's Committee on Energy was established pursuant to ESCWA's resolution 204 (XVIII) of 25 May 1995, which was adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1995/25 of 24 July 1995. The Committee on Energy is made up of representatives of ESCWA Member States who are specialized in the field of energy to undertake the following:
 - Participate in the establishment and formulation of priorities for programmes of work and medium-term plans in the field of energy;
 - Monitor developments in the field of energy in ESCWA Member States;
 - Monitor progress achieved through activities of the ESCWA secretariat in the field of energy;
 - Follow-up on international and regional conferences, the participation of Member States in those conferences and the coordination of Member States' efforts in connection with the implementation of resolutions and recommendations;
- b. The League of Arab States' Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity, which includes two technical committees: the Experts Committee for Electricity and the Experts Committee for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.

ESCWA's technical assistance to the work of these two Committees during the past two years resulted in the development of:

- Arab strategy for the development of renewable energy uses;
 - Arab guiding framework for improving energy efficiency in the electricity sector at the end-users level;
 - Guide on Arab countries' potentials in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency; and
 - Terms of reference for a feasibility study of electrical interconnections and energy trade among Arab countries;
- c. The establishment of a permanent Arab roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in the Arab region was agreed upon during the 21st session of the CAMRE, held in

November 2009. The roundtable comprised of UNEP/ROWA, ESCWA, CEDARE and other stakeholders is to be held at regular intervals in order to continue the exchange of expertise and knowledge, and carry out capacity-building activities on the subject. The First, Second and Third Roundtables of Experts on Sustainable SCP in the Arab region were held in Al-Ain in March 2008, Cairo in September 2009 and Cairo in January 2011, respectively. There is also an Arab Strategy for SCP;

- d. The Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE) is an independent regional think tank based in Cairo dedicated to the promotion of renewable energies and energy efficiency. RCREEE formulates and disseminates policies in support of renewable energies and energy efficiency, and provides a platform for the regional exchange on policy issues and technological questions. RCREEE was set up on the basis of the Cairo Declaration, which was signed by the ESCWA Member States on 25 June 2008. RCREEE has ten founding members, including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and Yemen;
- e. The Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) was established by an agreement among Arab countries which rely on the export of petroleum. OAPEC is a regional intergovernmental organization concerned with the development of the petroleum industry by fostering cooperation among its members. OAPEC contributes to the effective use of the resources of member countries by sponsoring joint ventures. The organization is guided by the belief in the importance of building an integrated petroleum industry as a cornerstone for future economic integration among Arab countries. OAPEC was established through an agreement signed in Beirut on 9 January 1968 by Kuwait, Libya and Saudi Arabia. The three founding members agreed that the organization would be located in Kuwait. By 1982, the membership of the organization had expanded to include eleven Arab oil exporting countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates. In 1986, Tunisia submitted a request for withdrawal;
- f. The Arab Union of Electricity (AUE), which groups electricity utilities throughout Arab countries, was previously named Arab Union of Producers, Transporters and Distributors of Electricity. The Arab Union of Electricity was established in 1987 by a group of Arab electrical companies with the purpose of strengthening ties between members to improve power manufacturing in the Arab world, improving and developing the electricity sector in the Arab world, and coordinating work and strengthening relations between members. The AUE is situated in Amman, Jordan and is comprised of 19 countries: Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, The Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania and Yemen;
- g. The Observatoire Méditerranéen de l'Energie (OME) is a non-profit association created in 1988. The association consists of 32 leading Mediterranean energy companies from 14 countries, including Egypt and Lebanon. Its offices are located in Nanterre, France. The main objective of the association is to promote cooperation and collaboration with major energy companies operating in the Mediterranean region, making energy an element of regional integration;
- h. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) was officially founded in Bonn on 26 January 2009. The founding of IRENA was a significant milestone for world renewable energy deployment and a clear sign that the global energy paradigm was changing as a result of the growing commitments from governments. At the Founding Conference, 75 States from all over the world signed IRENA's Statute. Mandated by governments worldwide, IRENA's mission is to promote the widespread and increased adoption and sustainable use of all forms of renewable energy. IRENA's Member States pledge to advance renewables in their own national policies and programmes, and to promote, both domestically and through international

cooperation, the transition to a sustainable and secure energy supply. IRENA aims to become the leading international centre of excellence for renewable energy and a platform for exchange and development of renewable energy knowledge. IRENA's headquarters are in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

(ii) *Water*

- a. The League of Arab States established the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), which convened its first session in June 2009. The council represents ministers responsible for water resources management from the 22 countries that comprise the Arab region. It is supported by a Technical Scientific and Advisory Committee comprised of senior-level representatives from Arab countries and regional organizations/agencies representing the League of Arab States and United Nations organizations, as well as civil society. There is also an Executive Bureau made up of a rotating number of member states supported by the League of Arab States secretariat and two of its organizations who specialize on water issues.

Shared water resources management is one of the main areas in which institutional and legal frameworks have been developed, yet they still need strengthening. Multilateral and bilateral agreements have been negotiated and adopted by some Arab countries to facilitate the management of shared water basins among riparian countries. However, there is a need to improve understanding and clarify regional perspectives on the international water law principles that have been developed to guide the formulation of such agreements. Fostering regional consensus on such principles can assist in the monitoring of existing agreements, the ratification of draft agreements, and the preparation of new agreements at the regional and international levels. In this regard, a regional process has been initiated under the auspices of the AMWC to develop a legal framework for shared waters in the Arab region. A call to prepare this regional framework was made during AMWC's second session held in July 2010 (Resolution no. 4, Item no. 3). The framework formalized a vision for addressing shared groundwater resources in the region as per the deliberations of the Ministers during AMWC's third session in June 2011, requesting with Resolution no. 20 to reorient the legal framework to focus on shared groundwater resources with the sole view of fostering (1) cooperation and participation; (2) equitable, reasonable, and sustainable use; and (3) conflict prevention and resolution.⁹

At the national level, ministries and authorities responsible for water resources and water services in the Arab region are often linked to ministries that are also responsible for energy or agriculture and irrigation. Water operators are either publically or privately owned, but are generally overseen by an independent unit in a ministry. Shared water resources management is generally tasked at the technical level to the appropriate Water Ministry, but generally also involves representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and line ministries primarily concerned with the more sensitive issue of water allocations. A handful of joint committees for shared water resources have also emerged at the basin level in some Arab countries. National water laws have also been adopted in a number of countries in the region to clarify the institutional mandates and powers that are assigned to different ministries with water-related responsibilities. For example, law 10-95 in Morocco sets forth an institutional framework for managing water resources with a view towards environmental protection as well as monitoring and responding to extreme events, such as droughts, which have repeatedly challenged the Moroccan water sector over the past decades;

- b. Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) is a new regional organization launched to share best practices and lessons learned for improving the delivery of water supplies and sanitation services through public and privately managed water establishments.

⁹ ESCWA-BGR (German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources), *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Applying IWRM (Integrated Water and Resource Management) Principles in Managing Shared Water Resources: Towards a Regional Vision* (1-3 December 2009).

Box 5. Arab Countries Water Utilities Association

The Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) is a regional centre of excellence that partners with water supply and wastewater utilities in Arab countries. Since its official launching in Amman, Jordan, in 2009, ACWUA is working on expanding its network of members to reach more than 100 water utilities, private sector companies and academic institutions. In addition, ACWUA has managed to sign several agreements and memorandums of understanding with various international organizations, which led to extensive benefits to the association and excellent support in achieving its goals and objectives. It is the centre point for regional and international experts to meet to exchange their knowledge and expertise, familiarize themselves with the latest water technologies and seek the utmost benefit for all.

3. Institutional frameworks for linking global and regional action on sustainable development

Since 1992, Arab countries have been increasingly involved in global conferences and conventions on sustainable development and in negotiations on their implementation.

Most of the countries were represented at the Earth Summit held in 1992 and the WSSD convened in 2002, and they are also parties to the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In subsequent discussions and negotiations on a successor to Kyoto, Arab countries have joined other developing countries in resisting an extension of commitments for reductions of greenhouse gas emissions outside the developed countries, whose accumulated emissions are the prime cause of the effect. Irrespective of this provision they have repeatedly articulated their commitment to sustainable development in many global forums.

Some of the major international treaties to which Arab countries are parties are given in table 7, along with their dates of ratification where applicable.

TABLE 6. DATE OF RATIFICATION OF MAJOR INTERNATIONAL TREATIES RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT¹⁰

	Kyoto Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change	Biosafety Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity	Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Algeria	16 Feb. 2005	5 Aug. 2004	22 Sep. 2006	12 Sep. 1989	22 May 1996
Bahrain	31 Jan. 2006	-	31 Jan. 2006	27 Sep. 2007	18 Jun. 2002
Comoros	10 Apr. 2008	25 Mar. 2009	23 Feb. 2007	-	31 Oct. 1994
Djibouti	12 Mar. 2002	8 Apr. 2002	11 Mar. 2004	5 Nov. 2002	2 Dec. 1998
Egypt	12 Jan. 2005	23 Dec. 2003	2 May 2003	14 Jan. 1982	18 Sep. 1981
Iraq	28 Jul. 2009	-	-	25 Jan. 1971	13 Aug. 1986
Jordan	17 Jan. 2003	11 Nov. 2003	8 Nov. 2004	28 May 1975	1 Jul. 1992
Kuwait	11 Mar. 2005	-	12 Jun. 2006	21 May 1996	2 Sep. 1994
Lebanon	13 Nov. 2006	-	3 Jan. 2003	3 Nov. 1972	16 Apr. 1997
Libya	24 Aug. 2006	14 Jun. 2005	14 Jun. 2005	15 May 1970	16 May 1989
Mauritania	22 Jul. 2005	22 Jul. 2005	22 Jul. 2005	17 Nov. 2004	10 May 2001
Morocco	25 Jan. 2002	-	15 Jun. 2004	3 May 1979	21 Jun. 1993
Oman	19 Jan. 2005	11 Apr. 2003	19 Jan. 2005	-	7 Feb. 2006
Qatar	11 Jan. 2005	14 Mar. 2007	10 Dec. 2004	-	29 Apr. 2009

¹⁰ Sources: <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/parties/>, http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/status_of_ratification/items/2613.php /, <http://www.pops.int/reports/StatusOfRatifications.aspx>, <http://treaties.un.org/> (accessed 21 April 2010).

TABLE 6 (*continued*)

	Kyoto Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change	Biosafety Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity	Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Saudi Arabia	31 Jan. 2005	9 Aug. 2007	-	-	7 Sep. 2000
Somalia	26 July 2010	26 Jul. 2010	26 Jul. 2010	24 Jan. 1990	-
The Sudan	2 Nov. 2004	13 Jun. 2005	29 Aug. 2006	18 Mar. 1986	-
Syrian Arab Republic	27 Jan. 2006	29 Jan. 2004	1 Sep. 2005	21 Apr. 1969	28 Mar. 2003
Tunisia	22 Jan. 2003	22 Jan. 2003	17 Jun. 2004	18 Mar. 1969	20 Sep. 1985
United Arab Emirates	26 Jan. 2005	-	11 Jul. 2002	-	6 Oct. 2004
Yemen	15 Sep. 2004	1 Dec. 2005	9 Jan. 2004	9 Feb. 1987	30 May 1984

B. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

Governance systems in most Arab countries have several common traits that influence the formulation of effective systems for sustainable development. Among these are:

1. *Strong national leadership*

Governments in the Arab region are generally led by strong leaders who play a central role in determining national policy directions and priorities. Except for Lebanon, leaders often remain in office for a considerable length of time, either through repeated re-election or within the governance structures of a kingdom, sultanate or emirate. This allows for general continuity in executive decision-making and for consistency of leadership, and also makes it possible to push forward and implement long term policies, provided that a sufficient degree of public support is maintained. Recent political events have made it clear that some of the region's leaders failed to achieve this.

2. *Centralized governance*

Centralizing the decision-making process tends to be the norm in the Arab region. A federalist form of government exists only in the United Arab Emirates, where each Emirate has autonomy in most areas other than defence and foreign policy. In other Arab countries, municipalities are generally managed through national governance structures, typically the Ministry of Interior or another ministry responsible for municipalities. Municipalities are rarely empowered to raise funds and their budgets are usually allocated from the national purse. Fees or taxes collected by municipalities are typically transferred to the national budget and then reallocated to local governments. A lack of decentralization limits the ability of local governments to formulate or implement local strategies based on Local Agenda 21 and related plans of action, and impedes their ability to apply economic instruments that influence local behaviour outside national policy frameworks. While some efforts at decentralized governance exist in the region, notably in Egypt, centralization remains a significant obstacle to implementing local initiatives in sustainable development.

3. *Top-down political culture*

Heads of governmental institutions and agencies, including environmental agencies, tend to be appointed rather than elected. Consequently, public participation and bottom-up consultative approaches to decision-making remain limited.

This top-down approach to environmental management and decision-making limits the responsiveness of environmental authorities to public concerns, particularly those that might run counter to government

priorities. While this characteristic is not unique to the Arab region, it is amplified by the presence of such top-down political culture.

Regardless of the institutional framework for environmental management, the following common challenges face environmental institutions in Arab countries:

- Despite general acceptance of the broad goals of sustainable development, its implications for the sustainability of economic development go largely unrecognized. In consequence, environmental protection and conservation still tend to be regarded as a constraint on economic development rather than as an essential pre-requisite for its long-term sustainability. Hence, environment agencies have considerably less power than economic and sectoral ministries, including those responsible for such natural resources as oil, minerals, water and fisheries;
- The institutional mandate of environmental institutions often gives them limited legislative, enforcement or licensing authority, particularly over high-profile projects of political and economic significance;
- Limited budgets constrain the ability of environmental authorities to implement programmes, monitor environmental compliance or develop technical capacity;
- Limited capacity to generate income limits the influence of environmental agencies in the decision-making process, particularly relative to Ministries of Economic and Trade Affairs;
- Overlapping jurisdictions of ministries, such as Ministries of Agriculture and Ministries of Water, can lead to policy conflicts, programme duplication and inefficiency.

4. National Commissions for Sustainable Development

In most Arab countries, NCSDs are often established or re-established on an ad hoc basis, including for the specific task of reporting to secretariats of international conventions. These reports sometimes have limited substantive input from other institutions and public stakeholders. Consequently, the end result may be little more than a descriptive account of the prevailing state of affairs without reference to political strategies or goals that need the endorsement of the government.

5. Regional framework for addressing sustainable development

Although JCEDAR has had some success in advancing the sustainable development agenda in the Arab region, this has been limited. While it is an inter-ministerial institution in its official capacity, in practical terms only officials from environmental ministries and authorities attend its proceedings. Furthermore, as an advisory committee to CAMRE, it has limited ability to access or engage non-environmental ministers on matters of sustainable development.

III. OPERATIONALIZING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

As we have noted several times, the institutional framework in Arab countries generally lacks effective mechanisms for integrating environmental and social issues into economic decision-making. Nonetheless, all of the relevant institutions within and outside the government have considerable expertise and ability which, if appropriately coordinated, could unleash a powerful force for the sustainable development of the region.

Outside government, important roles are played by the private sector, academic institutions and social and environmental NGOs. Most NGOs in the region are often bound by regulatory constraints, but nonetheless they enable concerned individuals with a high level of expertise to cooperate in the development and promotion of new approaches to sustainable development. The media is also often bound by such constraints, but the availability of such a powerful force supports the promotion of public dialogue on sustainable development issues. All Arab countries can pride themselves on the quality of their academic institutions, boasting considerable expertise in the aspects of sustainable development that are specific to the region. Meanwhile, the private sector has proved its own strengths in the markets in which it operates. In many cases, the private sector has the potential to move rapidly into those markets that would be opened up by innovative initiatives in order to promote the development of a green economy, diversify national economies and integrate the regional economy.

Within government the picture is similar. Ministries contain considerable expertise in those areas for which they are responsible, including many that are crucial for sustainable development in the region, such as Ministries for Water Resources and Ministries of Energy. However, the lack of an institutional framework for closer coordination is the principal constraint.

B. PLANNING MECHANISMS

To facilitate policy integration and guide effective policy implementation, Agenda 21 calls on countries to prepare NSDSs to ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations. Most Arab countries have begun or completed the task of developing some form of national environmental strategy, and some have also developed a poverty reduction strategy or equivalent. Strategies or action plans for adaptation to climate change have recently been developed in several countries. However, the slow progress in formulating an umbrella NSDS remains limited.

In 2009, only 7 out of 14 countries in Western Asia reported the implementation of their NSDS to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, lagging behind the 55 per cent reporting rate of the world as a whole. National strategies and action plans related to sustainable development in the region still tend to focus on environmental management rather than on sustainable development as such. Only a few Arab countries have prepared NSDSs that are close to fully integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development. Table 8 summarizes the situation in Arab countries for these different types of strategies.

Except in a few cases (such as Tunisia, as indicated in box 3), these strategies and action plans have had limited success in supporting policy integration in the planning process for sustainable development. They have been unable to foster effective policy dialogue and coordination across institutional lines, and have in some cases been incompatible with sectoral strategies. Other key obstacles include: (a) inadequate or non-existent policy assessments or cost-benefit analyses in strategy formulation; (b) insufficient prioritization of goals or formulation of criteria for prioritizing goals; (c) inadequate assignment of institutional responsibility for implementation; and (d) lack of synchronization of measures for implementation by different institutions. As a result some strategies are little more than wishlists that lack mechanisms for financing, coordination, implementation and oversight.

TABLE 7. NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN SELECT ARAB COUNTRIES

Country	National Sustainable Development Strategy or equivalent	Date	National Environmental Strategy, National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan or National Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan	Date	National platform on Agenda 21	Date
Algeria	National Strategy for the Protection of the Environment and Sustainable Development	2001				
Bahrain	National Strategy to Execute Agenda 21	Post 1996	Summary Report on Environmental Management	1994		
Comoros	National Environmental Action Plan	1994				
Djibouti	National Environmental Plan	2000				
Egypt			Egyptian Environmental Action Plan	1992		
			National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan	1998		
			National Environmental Action Plan	2001		
Iraq			Ministry of Environment's Five-year Plan			
Jordan	Jordan Agenda 21: Towards Sustainable Development	2000	National Environmental Strategy	1991		
			National Environmental Action Plan	1996		
Kuwait			National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan	1998		
			National Environmental Strategy	2000	Report on requirements for achieving Agenda 21	2001
			National Environmental Action Plan	In progress		
			Biodiversity Strategy	In progress	National Committee for Sustainable Development	2002
Lebanon			National Environmental Strategy	1996		
			Coastal Zone Assessment/Action Plan			
Oman			National Environmental Strategy	1995		
			National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan			
Mauritania	National Action Plan on Environment and Sustainable Development	2002				
Morocco	In preparation	2011	National Strategy for the Protection of the Environment and for Sustainable Development	1995		
			National Environmental Action Plan	2002		
Palestine			Environmental Note	1995		

TABLE 7 (continued)

Country	National Sustainable Development Strategy or equivalent	Date	National Environmental Strategy, National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan or National Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan	Date	National platform on Agenda 21	Date
			Biodiversity Protection Strategy	2000		
			Environmental Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2013	2010		
Qatar			National Environmental Action Plan (covering the phasing out of halons and the compliance of industrial dischargers to set standards)	..	Implementation of Agenda 21	1997
			National Environmental Strategy (covering natural reserves and coastal zones)	Under Preparation		
Saudi Arabia	In preparation	2011	State of the Environment	2000		
Syrian Arab Republic	National Strategy for Sustainable Development	2010	National Environmental Strategy and National Environmental Action Plan	2003		
			National Action plan for Combating Desertification	2002		
			National Strategy for Biological Diversity	2002		
			National Action Plan for Protection of Coastal Areas	2008		
Tunisia	National Agenda 21	1995	National Action Plan to Combat Desertification	1998		
			National Action Plan for the Sustainable Management of Biodiversity	1998		
United Arab Emirates			National Environmental Strategy	1999	National Agenda 21	1998
			National Environmental Action Plan	2000		
Yemen			Biological Diversity Assessment	1992		
			Programme for the National Action Plan for Environment and Development	1993		
			National Environmental Action Plan (Environmental Protection Council and Ministry of Planning and Development)	1996		
			Sustainable Environmental Management: Programme in Support of the National Environmental Action Plan 1997-2000	1996		
			National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan update (with UNDP support)	awaiting Cabinet approval		

In many cases the development of strategies and action plans is dependent on financial support from international development agencies, which reflects a lack of interest on the part of national governments. In such cases, sustainable development objectives and action plans may remain marginalized, underfunded and broadly irrelevant to government priorities.

C. IMPLEMENTING INSTRUMENTS

Environmental legislation has strengthened considerably in Arab countries in recent decades. Although enforcement may be constrained by limited technical capacity and financial resources, most environmental authorities have made significant progress in improving environmental protection and conservation. In some cases, technical assistance from international agencies initially led to the development of legislative instruments based on developed country models, but as experience reveals, these have generally been revised to meet local needs. Much remains to be done for further improving the environment and strengthening environmental conservation, although good progress has been achieved on many fronts.

The use of economic instruments for environmental management¹¹ has expanded in Arab countries, but still remains limited. In general there is a preference for command and control instruments over the more subtle approaches that are available for influencing the behaviour of polluters and generating funds for environmental protection and conservation. Environmentally perverse subsidies are still common and are often poorly targeted at the social groups they are intended to assist.

Challenges facing the effective implementation of policy instruments include:

- (a) Inadequate use of policy analysis to determine the most effective instrument to adopt;
- (b) Lack of selection criteria for identifying the best policy, including cost effectiveness, technical feasibility and political and cultural acceptability;
- (c) Poor synchronization of policy measures;
- (d) Limited technical, human and financial capacity;
- (e) Legal exemption of some activities from environmental oversight;
- (g) Inadequate monitoring;
- (h) Inability to enforce reporting and compliance requirements; and
- (i) Lack of evaluation to assess the effectiveness of policy measures.

D. REGIONAL AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS AND FINANCING INSTITUTIONS

Most national Ministries of Planning and Finance attach relatively low importance to sustainable development initiatives and do not have systematic means to allocate, secure and monitor funding. The integration of these initiatives into national development plans and sector plans remains limited and therefore reduces their opportunities for funding from national budgets.

Where national budgets are inadequate for supporting sustainable development, regional and global donor institutions play an important role. Bilateral donations from several of the Gulf countries, notably Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have generously supported many development initiatives in the region. Development assistance from international donors has also played an important role, particularly from the European Union, the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and several United Nations bodies.

¹¹ Examples include the recent duty exemption or reduction on the import of hybrid cars to Lebanon or the discounted price offered by the Lebanese Ministry of Power to first buyers of solar energy panels for home use.

As noted above, some internationally funded initiatives have had little influence beyond the life of the project, while others have been extremely valuable in helping to build capacity and initiate an ongoing process in support of sustainable development. In general, the value of external funding depends on a high degree of synergy between national objectives and priorities and those of the funding body. Typically, the most successful initiatives are those which provide additional funding and/or technical support to help accelerate a programme to which the government is already committed, while obtaining core funding as one of its own priority objectives.

Box 6. Arab authority for agricultural investment and development

The Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID) was established in 1976 as an independent financial agricultural investment institution. Twelve Arab states signed the legal documents of association with the following objectives:

- (a) Contribute to food security in Arab countries;
- (b) Develop agricultural resources in member states, placing emphasis on the production of the maximum possible amount of food;
- (c) Increase the exchange of agricultural products between Arab countries.

Following the hostilities in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, AAAID collaborated with ESCWA on the establishment of a revolving microcredit fund aiming to improve financing opportunities for existing and newly established micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in South Lebanon that are involved in agriculture and agrobusinesses. This fund had a tangible impact on job creation, poverty reduction and sustainable development in the region, as it helped MSEs to grow or diversify their business and gain additional clients. As a result, they were able to secure a higher income and improve their productivity, which helped some of the farmers to break their dependence on debt to wholesalers who impose unfavourable repayment schemes and other conditions in return.

There are also many sustainable development initiatives that can and should involve the private sector, particularly those related to the green economy and the economic dimension of sustainable development. In cases where there is a high degree of synergy between the government's responsibility to provide a public good and companies' responsibility to earn a profit, financing can come entirely from the private sector with the role of government reduced to providing the necessary institutional framework. However, caution should be exercised when assuming that private sector provision of public goods, such as water supply and sanitation, is more efficient. This assumption has not always proved to be the case.

Box 7. Arab fund for economic and social development

The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (the Arab Fund or AFESD), based in the State of Kuwait, is an Arab regional financial institution focused on funding economic and social development by financing public and private investment projects and providing grants and expertise. Its activities are characterized by a number of important aspects that make it a model of cooperation and Arab economic integration, and a reflection of outstanding joint Arab action in the field of sustainable development.

In 2002, ESCWA received a grant from the AFESD, who pledged to partially fund the implementation of an initiative aimed at employment creation to benefit disadvantaged communities in fields involving modern technologies, particularly through the implementation of pilot projects. Through this initiative, a number of distinct components were successfully established, including:

- (a) A modern garment design centre aimed at enhancing the manufacturing capabilities of a cluster of small and medium-sized garment production firms located in the impoverished area of Jebel Mohsen in North Lebanon;
- (b) A cluster of small farmers planting zaatar (thyme) in South Lebanon who were trained in the use of drip irrigation and modern zaatar processing techniques for enhanced productivity and competitiveness, and better management of natural resource use;

Box 7 (continued)

(c) A pilot sumac greenhouse and training facility in South Lebanon aimed at researching and preserving the genetic composition and biodiversity of Lebanese varieties of sumac, while also providing a facility to train small farmers on the domestication of sumac cultivation as an opportunity to generate income;

(d) A permanent facility aimed at providing practical, hands-on training in solar thermal water heater manufacturing, installation and maintenance to small enterprises and service providers, with emphasis placed on quality.

E. MONITORING, REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

As we have noted above, the environmental authorities in Arab countries have made good progress in strengthening their capabilities in the environmental arena, including for the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of environmental legislation. Despite limited capacity and financial resources, which fall short of what would be desirable for the highest standards of environmental protection and conservation, this aspect of sustainable development is reasonably well covered across the region. The main shortcoming is in the broader aspects of sustainable development, involving the integration of environmental, social and economic issues. In this respect, operationalizing sustainable development depends on the development and implementation of NSDSs.

The effectiveness of an NSDS itself depends on monitoring, reporting and assessment. A variety of frameworks have been developed and applied for this, generally in accordance with principles established by the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The NSDSs of three Arab countries, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, have been reviewed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, including an evaluation of the means for monitoring and evaluation.¹² Morocco's NSDS was still under development and did not yet include such arrangements. Those for Algeria and Tunisia had already been implemented.

The Algerian NSDS is monitored regularly through the use of environmental performance indicators to ensure that strategy objectives are translated into concrete programmes. The most recent evaluation resulted in the preparation of a national report on the state and future of the environment and recommendations for a better approach to the definition of programmes, projects and actions to implement the strategy. The evaluation made it possible to launch activities other than those initially envisaged in the NSDS, including strengthening capacities in specific areas such as clean technology and renewable energy. It may be noted that, while this outcome made an important contribution to improving environmental management in the country, the Algerian NSDS does little to help integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development.

The Tunisian NSDS has been more effective in this respect. It is monitored annually using a database of indicators covering economic, social, environmental, health and institutional dimensions. A subset of 40 indicators is used in evaluating national and sectoral performance related to sustainable development, and additional indicators are being developed to monitor the integration of its dimensions. The most recent evaluation resulted in: (a) identifying difficulties encountered during NSDS implementation and measures to reduce them; (b) redirecting sustainability objectives according to the evolution of the economic situation of the sector in question; (c) developing motivation tools for stakeholders engaged in sectoral processes; (d) directing public awareness activities to priority sectors; and (e) re-examining policies.

Both of these cases from Arab countries illustrate the value of utilizing an NSDS to pursue sustainable development, and of including a process for regular monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, the Tunisian

¹² UNECA, *National Strategies for Sustainable Development in Africa: A Sixteen-Country Assessment* (Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, 2011).

case illustrates practical means through which environmental and social issues can be more fully integrated into economic development policies. The Tunisian example aims to highlight an assessment of the process and tools and not the plan itself or its impact.

F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Earth Summit in 1992 identified the importance of public participation in planning for sustainable development and enshrined it in three of the principles of the Rio Declaration. Principle 10 states that environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, that each individual shall have appropriate access to environmental information held by public authorities, and that States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Principle 20 states that the full participation of women is essential to achieve sustainable development and Principle 22 requires that States should enable the effective participation of indigenous people and local communities in the achievement of sustainable development. Agenda 21 elaborated further on these basic principles.

Principle 10 contains the caveat that participation should take place at the relevant level. This is significant for the Arab countries, as it enables participatory arrangements to take into account the prevailing political culture. In the Arab region, the prevailing culture, traditions and political norms cannot easily tolerate public pressure or a bottom-up approach to policy formulation. This is reflected in the responses to the stakeholder survey, which indicated that processes for stakeholder participation in policy development remain weak in many of the countries. Nonetheless, to comply with the commitments that Arab countries made at the Earth Summit held in 1992, public participation has to be enabled at whatever level is considered to be relevant for any particular environmental issue.

As enshrined in the Rio principles, civil society engagement and public participation in decision-making are essential for strengthening governance for sustainable development in all countries, including in the Arab region. However, expanding the inclusiveness of governance mechanisms is a long-term process dependent on the evolution of the democratic process. While many Arab countries have done little more than initiate this process, sustainable development initiatives need to move forward, and can themselves further the process of empowering the public without overtly threatening existing institutional power structures and practices.

While legal and institutional arrangements that take into consideration local circumstances and national governance arrangements are an important component of implementing the Rio principles, environmental education, awareness, training, information disclosure and information dissemination are equally needed to support these efforts.

Despite the difficulties, environmental awareness has continued to spread across the region. Since 1978, environmental and social NGOs in many Arab countries have recognized and celebrated World Environment Day, held on 5 June each year, and in 1987 instituted Arab Environment Day (AED) on 14 October in support of this, promoting environmental awareness in general and also specific sustainable development themes. Government ministers and representatives of the League of Arab States contribute to the goal of raising awareness and enlisting support for environmental protection and conservation. AED themes have included priority issues for the region, namely peace and security, climate change, safer use of chemicals, education for sustainable development and sustainable consumption. In 2010, an Arab Water day was also instituted, which is dedicated to Arab water security.

The civil society organizations in the region have taken some effective initiatives. They are relying on readable and visual media to promote sustainable development among communities, such as the monthly newsletter *Montda Al-Biah*, issued by the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) since 1990.

The Arab media have taken an important step by establishing the Arab Media Forum for Environment and Development, whose main objective is to educate and train Arab journalists on issues of sustainable development and empower them to be more effective in transmitting their message to the public. In order to fulfil their considerable potential and to maximize the impact on sustainable development policymaking, the Arab media can go further, for example by forming stronger connections with other civil society sectors, including NGOs and academic and scientific institutions. They could also be more proactive in exposing environmental violations, in following up on enforcement of environmental laws, and in making the interconnectedness of development, health, and environmental issues a matter of everyday coverage.

IV. STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. SUCCESS STORIES IN SELECT ARAB COUNTRIES

1. Strategic planning for sustainable development in Tunisia

As set out at the Earth Summit held in 1992, the integration of environmental and social issues into economic decision-making is an essential requirement for achieving sustainable development. This is particularly important at the strategic level, which establishes the parameters for all lower levels of decision-making on development. The approach developed and process engaged in by Tunisia for the integration of sustainable development principles into its five-year economic and social development plans (see box 3) has been identified as an example of good practice by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Key elements of the Tunisian approach have included:

- (a) Participatory development of an NSDS in the form of Tunisia's National Agenda 21;
- (b) Creation of an NCSD in 1993 to engage governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the development and implementation of the NSDS. It is chaired by the Prime Minister as well as specialized institutions, such as the Tunisian Observatory for the Environment and Sustainable Development;
- (c) Establishment of the Supreme Council for the Environment and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources as a successor to the NCSD in 2010 as part of the tireless efforts by the Tunisian authorities to keep up with progress made at all levels;
- (d) Incorporation of key elements of the NSDS into the country's five-year Social and Economic Development Plans, and hence into associated sectoral strategies and development plans;
- (e) Identification of priority measures and concrete actions for implementation of NSDS objectives within Social and Economic Development Plans;
- (f) In the legal area, creation of a pollution control fund;
- (g) Establishment of a Technical Committee to support the work of the NCSD, with expert-level representation from concerned ministries, academic institutions and NGOs;
- (h) Development and implementation of a Local Agenda 21 programme driven by the NSDS;
- (i) Annual monitoring of the NSDS, using indicators covering economic, social and environmental dimensions; and
- (j) Responding to monitoring results through actions to revise implementation measures.

2. Strategic planning for sustainable development in Jordan

Jordan's Agenda 21 was prepared to be the first comprehensive environmental agenda responding to the Earth Summit in 1992. However, Jordan's Agenda 21 was not translated into an integrated action plan that took into account the three pillars of sustainable development.

In 2006, four years after the WSSD held in Johannesburg, the Government of Jordan adopted for the first time a strategic development framework, also known as the National Agenda, which finally acknowledged the challenges Jordan was facing in incorporating the multiple dimensions of sustainable

development. The ultimate purpose of this National Agenda is to achieve sustainable development through a transformation programme that puts Jordan on a path toward fast economic growth and greater social inclusion. This will result in comprehensive strategies and initiatives developed to realize social, economic and political development, and to evaluate and monitor progress of its implementation according to detailed performance indicators. Such effort is what makes the National Agenda different from past development programmes.

The National Agenda can be considered as a long-term strategic plan whose implementation will span a period of ten years (2006-2016) and which requires periodic updating and revision in the light of internal and external political, economic and social developments.

The National Agenda's distinct features are as follows:

(a) **Philosophy:** The National Agenda adopted a holistic approach to address challenges facing Jordan, setting initiatives for the political, social, economic, cultural and environmental development. This is unlike previous reform plans, which fully focused on the economic dimension;

(b) **Inclusion:** The National Agenda initiatives were the outcome of a concrete, inclusive process, in which all sectors and schools of thought were represented. The Royal Committee members include members of Parliament, Government officials, political parties and representatives of the private sector, civil society and media organizations;

(c) **Implementation:** For the first time in Jordan, the National Agenda includes a clear mechanism to measure the implementation of the initiatives and evaluate the impact of reforms. It also sets clear targets for each initiative, which have to be met over next ten years (2006-2016). Priorities are reflected in the budget, supported by performance indicators that measure and assess the success of implementation;

(d) **Commitment:** The National Agenda represents the basic substance of the programmes that have been and that will be adopted by successive Governments;

(e) **Accountability:** Unlike previous reform plans, the transparency of implementation mechanisms have and will continue to foster the accountability of the Government, as will periodic reports which monitor performance and evaluate the progress of implementation.

A National Agenda Steering Committee was instituted by a Royal Decree issued on 9 February 2005.¹³ This Committee comprised representatives from the Government, Parliament, civil society, the private sector, media and political parties.

The Committee chose to follow a process of 'national inclusion' by involving stakeholders from the various sectors of the society to develop the National Agenda. The aim was to ensure a fair distribution of the anticipated social, economic and political benefits. Thus, the National Agenda initiative reflected a national consensus on aspirations and ambitions of Jordanians for the first time.

In support of achieving National Agenda goals and targets, the Committee structured the development of initiatives around eight themes. Task forces consisting of nearly 300 Jordanians with relevant knowledge and expertise were formed and led by the 22 members of the National Committee for Sustainable Development.

¹³ This is an example of a good practice in the planning of sustainable development, however implementation has unfortunately not started yet.

The teams conducted in-depth reviews of challenges and developed initiatives to address the following themes:

- (a) Political development and inclusion;
- (b) Justice and legislation;
- (c) Investment development;
- (d) Financial services and fiscal reform;
- (e) Employment support and vocational training;
- (f) Social welfare;
- (g) Education, higher education, scientific research and innovation;
- (h) Infrastructure upgrade.

The themes can be aggregated into three categories representing the National Agenda policy initiatives for achieving sustainable development in Jordan:

(a) Government and policies category – involves reforms intended to contribute to the stimulation of economic development and improvement of social welfare and security. These reforms revolve around making improvements to the investment environment, fiscal discipline, internal political stability, administrative development, justice, accountability, transparency, labour policies, vocational training, support for workers, minimum wage, maximum working hours, economic competitiveness, freedom of capital movement, reductions in trade barriers, support for small and medium enterprises, and education;

(b) Basic rights and freedoms category – covers social inclusion, global inclusion, religious freedom, political and cultural development, equality before the law, access to healthcare, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, citizenship rights and a free and responsible media sector;

(c) Services, infrastructure and economic sectors category – includes a safe transportation network, affordable public transport, adequate water sources, effective water use and leveraging of non-conventional water resources, cost-effective energy supply, environmental sustainability, universal access to information and communications technology, promotion of manufacturing, sound financial services and access to adequate healthcare services.

3. Regional non-governmental institutional capacity

The engagement of civil society stakeholders is a key factor in the identification and implementation of sustainable development goals. In order to play an effective role, stakeholder groups need to develop strong institutional capacity. Established in 2006, AFED has made a major contribution to achieving this for the entire Arab region.

AFED and RAED are regional not-for-profit NGOs which have an observer status in the League of Arab States and work to promote prudent environmental policies and programmes across the Arab region. They aim to bring together planners, decision-makers, the business community, civil society, media, and others who are interested in environmental and developmental issues to propagate environmental awareness and incite Arab societies towards environmental protection, rational utilization of natural resources and the realization of sustainable development. They work to achieve their goals through:

(a) Disseminating periodical reports on the state of the environment and natural resources in the Arab world;

(b) Regular meetings to discuss regional reports on environmental matters and investigate their impact on the process of sustainable development in the Arab world;

- (c) Working with the business community in the Arab world to develop a Corporate Environmental Responsibility Programme, adopt sustainable practices and move towards cleaner production technologies;
- (d) Encouraging scientific research on current and emerging environmental issues in the Arab world;
- (e) Cooperating with the media and the advertising sectors to promote environmental awareness;
- (f) Working with educational institutions, universities and research centres towards the development of environmental education programmes at all levels;
- (g) Supporting the networking of NGOs active in environment and development work and coordinating joint programmes among them;
- (h) Advancing dialogue between Arab State authorities and their international counterparts, as well as ministries and organs concerned with the environment in the Arab world.

AFED has been highly successful in winning support for its goals from the business community, allowing it to secure substantial funding for its programmes. These have included numerous consultation meetings and workshops on sustainable development issues, and the publication of three major reports on the environment in Arab countries. These have covered future challenges (2008), climate change (2009) and water (2010). The forthcoming 2011 AFED report will focus on the green economy, thus being the first major output related to the Arab Green Economy Initiative.

Under the RAED umbrella, members have implemented successful projects in the Arab region, including on solid waste recycling, water conservation, renewable energy, and the protection of endangered species. Recently, RAED has paid greater attention to climate change and the green economy. They are bringing together stakeholders from government, academia, civil society, utilities, media and the private sector to discuss the implications of climate change at the national and regional levels, and are identifying areas at risk to design an action plan that lays out specific adaptation strategies.

4. Green economy

Some scepticism towards a transition to a green economy that has emerged during the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting on Rio+20.

Some Arab governments question the applicability of the green economy to the region and are doubtful about replacing the issue of sustainable development with green growth. Others argue that the costs of such a transition, in particular during the present global crisis, may delay any economic growth anticipated and may negatively affect initiatives to alleviate poverty. Another voice claims that the green economy is a way through which rich countries can impose environmental standards and green trade barriers/tariffs on exports from developing countries.

These are reasonable concerns and it is important to address them when discussing a transition to a green economy; however, one can also look at the green transition as not only a challenge for Arab countries (many of which can still be considered in a transition to democracy), but also as an opportunity.

The importance of this green economy debate for the Arab region has been recognized by many civil society bodies such as AFED and the Egyptian National Competitiveness Council, who have launched major initiatives. In parallel, ESCWA has proposed fundamental principles and a general framework for a ministerial initiative for an Arab green economy.

(a) *The ESCWA principles and framework for an Arab green economy*

ESCWA has reviewed international green economy initiatives in order to identify fundamental principles which should be defended by Arab countries in international forums and to develop a general framework for a ministerial initiative for an Arab green economy.

A study prepared and published by ESCWA's Sustainable Development and Productivity Division in 2011, "Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, Principles, Opportunities and Challenges in the Arab Region", proposed a set of actions for a transition to a green economy in the Arab region in different sectors. The main actions being: strengthening the role of private sector and civil society through partnerships, accelerating regional integration, promoting national education and R&D systems, improving vocational training, and boosting technological transfer/innovation and new financial mechanisms. Also of importance, green economy principles must be merged into national development plans and regional policies, and be supported by a system of good governance in terms of a new set of legislation and financial instruments. However, the study identifies that "the biggest challenge for Arab countries is to determine which entry points into a green economy will provide the maximum benefits for all parts of society. Of particular importance is to determine, based on national circumstances, the policy reforms that need to be adopted for developing economic activities in which a country can have a competitive position in global green markets." In addition, the study urges Arab countries to "develop guidelines for the identification and recognition of 'green' economy activities that are standardized and harmonized for all Arab countries in order to monitor progress and achievements.

The principles proposed by ESCWA alerted Arab countries to the danger that green economy measures could be used by developed countries to impose conditionalities on official development assistance to circumvent the Rio principles on common but differentiated responsibilities, to promote green protectionism, or to divert funding from other priorities. Arab countries should insist on retaining flexibility in choosing their own pathways to a green economy, commensurate with national and regional specificities and priorities. The ESCWA framework for a ministerial initiative on an Arab green economy underlines the importance of a participatory approach that includes stakeholders from the public and private sectors and civil society. The proposed Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development should recommend developing a detailed regional economic paradigm that analyzes and evaluates the transition costs and the capacity of a green economy to stimulate economic growth in the Arab region, create job opportunities and reduce poverty. ESCWA also suggests intensifying capacity-building programmes that enable stakeholders in the public and private sectors to contribute to a successful transition to a green economy in accordance with the priorities and needs of Arab populations.

(b) *Egyptian National Competitiveness Council*

The Egyptian National Competitiveness Council is a platform bringing together stakeholders from business, government, academia and civil society to raise awareness on competitiveness issues and to advocate appropriate policies. This institution plays a key role in managing green economy strategies and action plans in Egypt and in strengthening sustainable development institutions in such an important historical phase. In its seventh annual report, *Green Egypt: A Vision for Tomorrow*, the Council adopted the transition to a green economy as its thematic focus.¹⁴ The report argued that, in the face of tough global competition, Egypt needs new engines of growth to drive its economy and create new jobs. A green transformation would help to achieve this and would bring many other economic, environmental and social benefits. Countries and companies that catch the wave early are expected to participate in what has been called the next big era of human history, while lack of action could bring negative consequences for those that fall behind. Egypt has many characteristics which place it in a strong position to play a leading role,

¹⁴ Egyptian National Competitiveness Council, *Green Egypt: A Vision for Tomorrow: the 7th Egyptian Competitiveness Report* (2010).

including high abundance of solar and wind resources. However, other countries are moving faster, including developing countries such as Brazil, China and India.

The Council's report argued that a green transformation entails transforming the entire national economy and presented recommendations for the private sector, banks, education and research institutions, civil society and NGOs. However, the Government would need to establish the necessary framework and set the course through actions that would include:

- (i) A clear and comprehensive policy statement backed with financial commitments;
- (ii) Realignment of the existing regulatory and institutional framework to provide incentives for the adoption and production of green technology;
- (iii) An incentive system for green investments;
- (iv) A task force on green transformation and a 'one-stop' office for promoting green investment;
- (v) Promotion of education on green opportunities, technologies and sustainable growth;
- (vi) Raising public awareness of green technology opportunities;
- (vii) A benefit tracking system to evaluate progress in the transition towards a greener economy.

B. A NEW APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A review prepared by ESCWA in 2003 proposed a series of recommendations for strengthening institutions and institutional arrangements for governance for sustainable development in Arab countries, which covered the creation of new national institutions and institutional arrangements, mechanisms for operationalizing sustainable development and regional approaches to governance for sustainable development. Although many of the developments discussed in previous sections of this report reflect significant success in implementing several of these recommendations, others have proved more difficult. We therefore propose a new approach to strengthening governance for sustainable development in the region, which places environmental and social issues more firmly in the context of the economic dimension of sustainable development.

As identified in the 2003 review and reaffirmed here, a significant gap remains in developing a fully integrated approach to environmental, social and economic policy-making. While this is a common problem throughout the world it is particularly crucial for the Arab region, whose long-term economic prosperity is critically dependent on key environmental and social issues. These include the limited availability of water resources, declining fossil fuel resources, the contribution of exploiting those resources to climate change, high vulnerability to climate change, high levels of youth unemployment and associated civil unrest. The proposed approach therefore begins with a discussion on the region's future economic development and then examines the issues that must be addressed to make this environmentally sustainable and successful in terms of social impact. On this basis we present a number of recommendations for institutional reforms through which environmental and social issues may be more fully integrated into economic decision-making.

1. *The economic dimension of sustainable development*

(a) *The role of the hydrocarbon sector in economic development*

The economies of most of the Arab countries are strongly influenced by the oil and gas industries. About half the countries are oil exporters, with the industry forming a major component of the economy and

the biggest source of government revenue. Many of the non-oil Arab countries also experience a strong economic influence from the industry through the supply of migrant labour to the oil-exporting group, tourist services and significant flows of inward investment and development aid. Because the resource is finite, the region's oil dependency is clearly unsustainable in the long term, but in the short to medium term, this is not a major issue for many of the oil exporters. In Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates the ratio of proven reserves to production is over 50 years. In contrast, in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic the ratio is less than 20 years, and not a great deal higher in the Sudan and Yemen. Some of these countries have made significant progress in diversifying their economies, but much remains to be done.

The ratio of reserves to production is generally higher for natural gas than for oil, but at lower levels of production. If it were possible to raise the region's gas production sufficiently to compensate for a future decline in oil revenue, the life of the total energy resource would be only marginally greater than for oil alone.

While the region's endowment of oil resources is a major contributor to its prosperity, it has, to some extent at least, been a mixed blessing. Economic growth is dependent primarily on either a rising oil price or rising production, which results in periods of negative growth when prices fall. This growth volatility is accompanied by limited incentives for investment in the type of industries that provide expanding employment opportunities, particularly in the dynamic knowledge-based industries that are appropriate for a young, highly educated workforce and sustained economic growth. Heavy dependence on oil revenues may also have restricted the transparency of government budgets and hampered public accountability.

The need to diversify the region's economies will become even more acute if global agreement is reached on effective action to slow and halt climate change. A fully effective carbon trading system or carbon tax would need to raise world prices sufficiently to cause a major decline in demand. There is modest immediate prospect of any such agreement, but global restraints on the consumption of fossil fuels should be allowed for in strategic economic planning for the region.

(b) *The roles of regional bodies for agriculture, manufacturing and services*

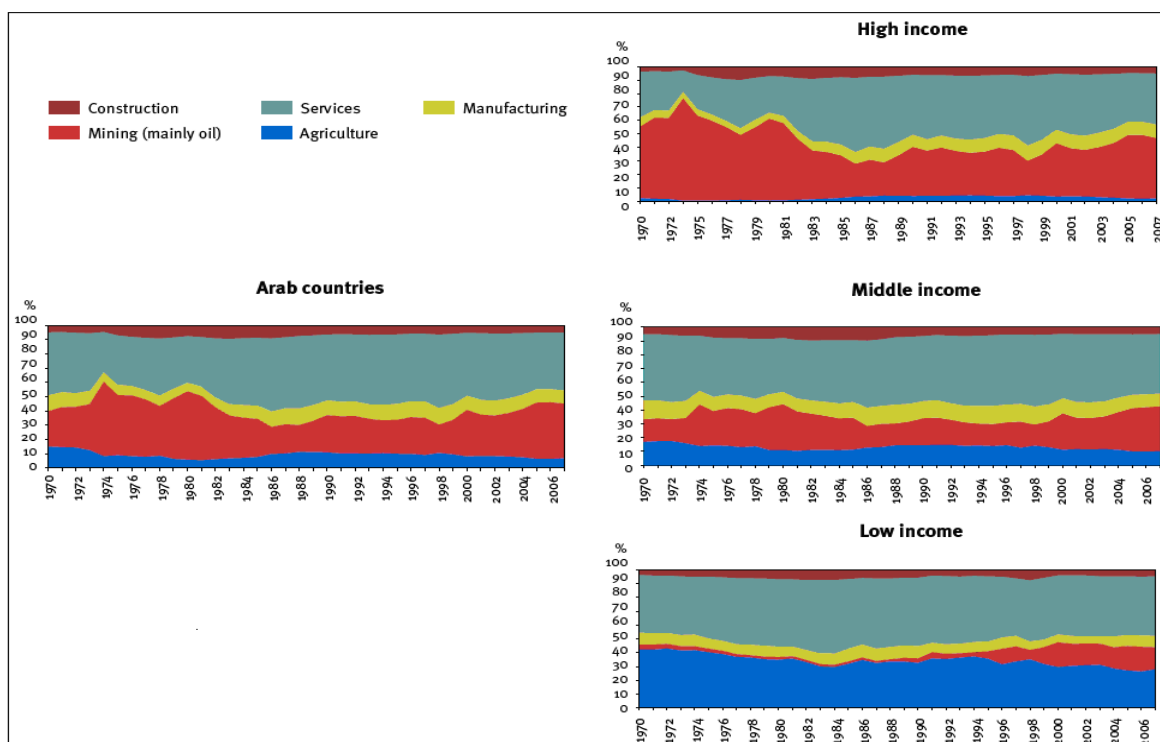
In many Arab countries the region's heavy economic dependence on the oil industry has resulted in the marginalization of both the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, and in the development of locally oriented service industries that are uncompetitive internationally except in few areas. The share of agriculture in the gross domestic product (GDP) has been declining since the late 1980s for the region as a whole, but the sector remains a major source of livelihood in many Arab countries (Figure I). About 30 per cent of the Arab region's population is employed in agriculture, ranging from around 5 per cent in Saudi Arabia to 30 per cent in Egypt, 44 per cent in Morocco and over 50 per cent in Yemen.¹⁵ Agriculture still dominates the economy in Comoros and Somalia, reaching to 48 per cent and 60 per cent of their GDP, respectively. However, agriculture represents a much smaller proportion of GDP, at only 7 per cent for the Arab region as a whole, ranging from 0.1 per cent in Qatar to 10 per cent in Yemen, 14 per cent in Egypt and Morocco, and 22.5 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic.¹⁶ Many of the countries have become heavily dependent on food imports, including Egypt, Jordan, Libya and the majority of the Gulf States.

Some key institutions have played a key role for the economic pillar of sustainable development, including the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the Arab Labor Organization and General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries. These have been active over the last 10 years in the fields of sustainable agriculture, sustainable and green tourism and green industries.

¹⁵ *Arab Human Development Report*. (New York, United Nations, 2009).

¹⁶ UN Statistics Division, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/selcountry.asp>.

Figure I. Structure of gross domestic product in Arab countries by economic sector



Source: UNDP 2009.

Manufacturing represents about 10 per cent of the GDP across the region, ranging from under 2 per cent in Iraq to around 17 per cent in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. Overall, the manufacturing share of GDP has been stagnant since the 1970s, with a significant decline in countries such as Algeria. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the proportion of the manufacturing industry in the GDP rose from 30.12 per cent in 2000 to 32.20 per cent in 2008, and then declined to 24.96 per cent in 2009 due to the impact of the financial crises. Other countries such as Jordan, Oman, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates have shown significant manufacturing growth, although much of this has been in garments and other low-technology products.

Services account for nearly 50 per cent of the GDP across the region. Government services play a major role, along with construction, tourism, transport and distribution. Several countries have established a strong regional position in high-added-value services, such as financial services and telecommunications, but have yet to become fully competitive in the wider international market.

(c) *Inward and outward investment*

The oil industry has had a dominant influence on investment both into and out of the Arab region. The income from the industry has enabled the oil exporting States to provide large outflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) and to accumulate significant sovereign wealth funds and other external reserves, which provide a buffer for government expenditure against the volatility of oil prices. Meanwhile, much of the FDI into the region is from international companies that are active in the region and is directed into further development of the industry.¹⁷ Additional inward investment has been generated through privatization programmes, particularly in the cement, telecommunications and banking industries, and from the creation of export processing zones (notably in the garment industry).¹⁸

¹⁷ ESCWA, *Foreign Direct Investment Report. Technical Paper 2*, (New York, United Nations, 2009).

¹⁸ ESCWA, *Foreign Direct Investment Report. Technical Paper 1*, (New York, United Nations, 2008).

Intraregional FDI flows account for over a third of FDI inflows into Arab countries, with the oil-exporting countries as the principal source and the non-oil countries as the main recipients. Much of the investment has been directed towards sectors offering short-term profitability, such as real estate, construction, telecommunications services, transport infrastructure and tourism. Investment in agriculture and manufacturing, particularly in high technology sectors, has been much more limited.¹⁹

(d) *Trade, globalization and the influence of emerging economies*

Eleven Arab countries are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Many have entered into preferential trade agreements with major trading partners, particularly the European Union and the United States of America. Several intraregional agreements have also been established, including the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, the Agadir Agreement, the Arab Maghreb Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council, which has recently planned to include Jordan. Intraregional trade is a fairly small proportion of Arab countries' total trade, but this is largely a result of the region's oil exports. For non-oil -producers such as Jordan and Lebanon, trade within the region is over 40 per cent of total trade.

In 2002, CAMRE requested ESCWA and UNEP to coordinate and cooperate with it to develop a regional programme for Arab capacity-building on trade and environment issues, especially on measures that limit Arab export competitiveness in international markets and that relate to trade negotiations and adjusting to the rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization related to the environment (Article 2, point 2 of CAMRE Resolution 24 October 2002). National Trade and Environment Committees were formed in several Arab States with the participation of various stakeholders involved in sustainable development.

Box 8. Jordan's trade and environment committee

Jordan's Trade and Environment Committee was established by a decision of the Prime Ministry based on the recommendation of the Minister of Environment in 2003.

The Committee is comprised of representatives from the following ministries and organizations:

- Ministry of Environment (Chair and Secretariat of the T&E Committee);
- Ministry of Industry and Trade;
- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation;
- Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources;
- Ministry of Transport
- Ministry of Justice;
- Ministry of Agriculture;
- Jordan Customs Department
- Jordan Institute for Standards and Metrology;
- Amman Chamber of Industry
- Amman Chamber of Commerce;
- Royal Scientific Society;
- Friends of Environment Society

Vision

Jordan's Trade and Environment Committee is a highly recognized and fully participatory, professional, well-informed and active body very experienced in the national environmental and economic needs and requirements. It represents Jordan and its interests in the international, regional and national arenas to achieve sustainable development.

¹⁹ B. Laabasa and W. Abdmoulabb, "Determinants of Arab Intraregional Foreign Direct Investments", *Journal of Business & Policy Research*, vol.4, No. 2 (2009), pp. 138-169.

Box 8 (continued)

Mission

To strategize, plan and manage Jordan's environmental/trade portfolio through the representation and delegation of roles and responsibilities in a professional and accountable manner. It also continuously provides decision-makers with the necessary support for placing Jordan in an environmentally sound and economically favourable position.

As a credible and accountable body that institutionally employs a transparent and participatory approach, a clear statement of commitment by all key members is required.

Objectives

- (a) Data collection and baseline reporting;
- (b) Awareness and outreach to promote communication;
- (c) Harmonize Jordan's economic priorities with local environmental needs;
- (d) Impact decision-making at the international and regional level;
- (e) Strengthen bilateral relations with all stakeholders, and enhance communication at national, regional, and international levels;
- (f) Continuously build member's capacity through a professional process of consultations, self-analysis and gap analysis.

Agricultural imports into the region consist mainly of grains, dairy produce and sugar, while exports are mainly fruits and vegetables. Manufactured exports are mainly labour-intensive products with low to average technological intensity such as garments. Investment in science and technology is low in most of the region, although Tunisia and Morocco have established a foothold in the supply of components to the European automotive industry.

Remittances from migrant workers make a significant contribution to foreign earnings in many of the low and middle income Arab countries. Overseas aid is another significant source of income for many of these countries, and the main source for the others (particularly Palestine).

Arab countries' main trading partners outside the region are in Europe and North America, but emerging economies have begun to play a larger role. The Arab region's oil endowment makes it an attractive trading partner throughout the world. Brazil and other South American countries are significant suppliers of agricultural produce and minerals. Low-cost imports of textiles and clothing from China and other Asian countries pose a significant threat to domestic suppliers, but with prospects of inward investment and technology transfer to help accelerate the development of a wide range of industries with higher technology levels and skill levels.

(e) *Economic diversification and rural-urban integration*

The need for technological upgrading and economic diversification in Arab countries is complemented by an equally urgent need for agricultural development, as identified in the Arab Human Development Report for 2009. Economic diversification and agricultural development are closely interlinked. Agricultural development can itself contribute to diversification, and associated rural industries can contribute to the development of urban industry. More fundamentally, agricultural modernization typically reduces employment, which will add to the region's already high unemployment levels unless appropriately integrated with expanding opportunities in other sectors.

It has been argued that Arab countries can and should follow the example of other even poorer countries that succeeded in changing the course of development.²⁰ As noted in Chapter I, the Republic of Korea's experience is quite the opposite.²¹ The country's economic transformation was based on an evolving series of strategic development plans that targeted specific industries, provided incentives for capital investment in those industries, invested in research and development in their particular fields of science and technology, and established education and training programmes tailored to their specific needs. Government programmes and incentives for the creation of rural-urban linkage industries helped to build synergies between the industrial and agricultural components of the strategy. Many Arab countries have undertaken similar initiatives, but few have attempted to develop a comprehensive programme linking the development of the urban and rural economies. Any such programme would need to be tailored to the specific circumstances of each country and to the particular industrial activities which are expected to play the biggest role in its economic diversification and development.²²

(f) *Regional economic integration*

As measured by an index based on intraregional trade, investment, remittances and tourism, Jordan is ranked the most integrated among the Arab countries while Algeria is the least (see Table 9). The Maghreb countries tend to be among the least integrated with other Arab countries because of their strong trading links with Europe, while Saudi Arabia's low rank is influenced by the dominance of its oil industry.

TABLE 8. RANKING OF ARAB COUNTRIES BY THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION INDEX 2008

	Ranking	Index
Jordan	1	8.0085
Bahrain	2	6.0436
Lebanon	3	5.0940
Oman	4	4.9726
Syrian Arab Republic	5	3.8282
United Arab Emirates	6	3.0545
Yemen	7	2.3948
Kuwait	8	2.3792
Qatar	9	1.9050
The Sudan	10	1.7731
Egypt	11	1.3556
Tunisia	12	1.1649
Libya	13	0.8082
Saudi Arabia	14	0.7935
Morocco	15	0.5794
Algeria	16	0.1882

Source: ESCWA (2009).

Significant progress has been made in some aspects of Arab economic integration, but less so in many key areas.²³ For example, the 2009 Arab Human Development Report argues that increasing food security in the region needs to go further than the reductions in customs barriers that have been achieved so far. The report calls for the regional integration of grain production as a first step towards integration for all categories of food. As well as removing customs barriers, strategic stores would be established to offset

²⁰ G. Corm, "The Arabs in the post-oil era", in *Arab Human Development Report*, box 9-3, (2009).

²¹ Hyung-Sup Choi, "Technology for Development: The South Korean Experience", in *Mobilizing Technology for World Development*, J. Ramesh and C. Weiss, eds. (New York, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1979).

²² Impact Assessment Research Centre, *Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area* (University of Manchester, 2007).

²³ ESCWA, *Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Arab Countries 2009* (New York, ESCWA, United Nations, New York, 2009).

fluctuations in supply, exchanges in production surpluses would be set up and further investment would be made in processing, marketing, and transport.

A second key area that would benefit considerably from full regional economic integration is the development of a regional green economy, as discussed in the following section.

2. The social dimension of sustainable development

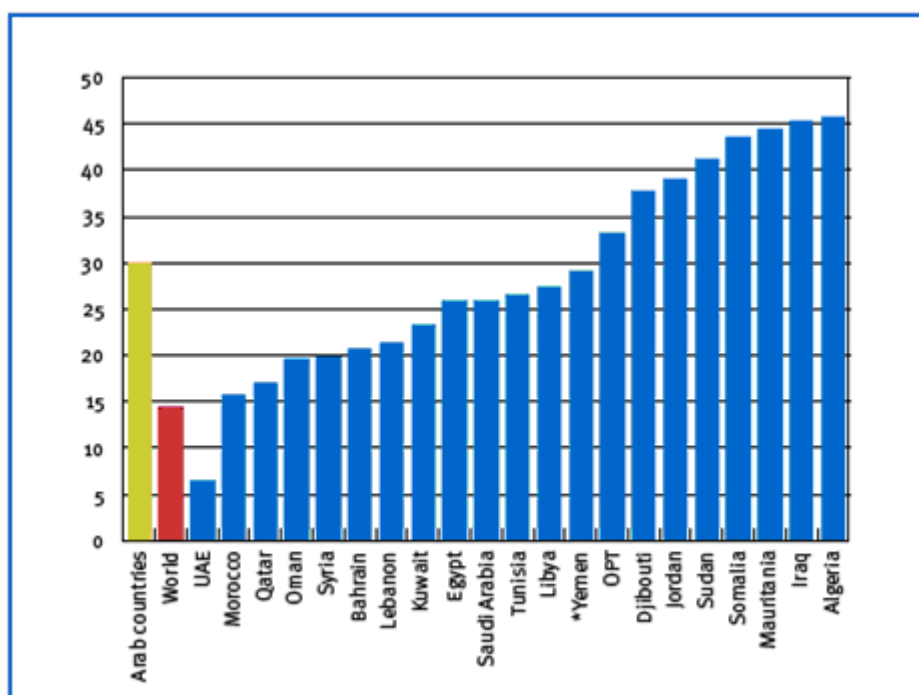
The social issues of sustainable development in Arab countries have been well documented in many recent reports, including the Arab Human Development Report for 2009 and the 2010 report on the MDGs prepared by ESCWA for the League of Arab States.²⁴ The following sections summarize the main issues identified in these reports.

(a) Unemployment

Unemployment rates in Arab countries are among the highest in the world and are widely considered to be one of the region's most serious challenges. According to official statistics, the overall unemployment rate in the region is around 14 per cent, which may be an underestimate. Youth unemployment, at 30 per cent or more in many Arab countries, is a particular concern (see figure II).

This is exacerbated by high rates of population growth. Although fertility rates have decreased, infant mortality and life expectancy have improved such that population continues to grow at around 2 per cent per annum. The availability of employment opportunities for new entrants to the workforce has lagged behind so that youth unemployment in the Arab countries is nearly double the world average.

Figure II. Unemployment rate among Arab youth



Source: UNDP 2009.

²⁴ United Nations/LAS, *The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises*, (New York and Cairo, United Nations and LAS, 2010).

(b) *Poverty and health*

Considerable success has been achieved in reducing poverty across the Arab region as a whole, but this has occurred mainly in the middle income countries. The low income Arab countries have lagged significantly behind, with over 30 per cent of the population estimated to be living in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is particularly widespread among rural populations.

Similar success has also been achieved across the region in reducing maternal, infant and child mortality rates, and in increasing life expectancy. However, the provision of health care remains a concern in low income Arab countries, particularly those that have suffered from long-lasting conflicts.

(c) *Food security*

Food security is a concern throughout the region, which is a net food importer and a large importer of grain. The region's low self-sufficiency rate in staple foods is regarded as one of its most serious development challenges. Along with sub-Saharan Africa, it is one of only two world regions where the number of undernourished has risen since the beginning of the 1990s.

The region's dependency on imports of basic foods makes it particularly vulnerable to rising world food prices, caused by, inter alia, rising consumption in large emerging economies, world demand for biofuels, and the effects of climate change. Low income countries are particularly affected, along with the urban poor across most of the region.

(d) *Education*

Considerable advances have been made in primary and secondary education in most countries of the region, such that adult literacy rates have increased significantly. However, tertiary education remains weak and is poorly aligned to the needs of knowledge-oriented economic growth.

Despite the advances across the region as a whole, significant geographical disparities remain between rural and urban areas, and access to primary education continues to be a critical challenge in low income Arab countries. Access to education is also a major challenge in the conflict and post-conflict countries of the region.

(e) *Governance*

Concerns over governance issues have led to an increasingly active and vocal civil society in almost all Arab countries. Several countries prohibit the formation of political parties and some have undergone long periods of martial law or emergency rule. The transparency of government decision-making is often limited.

A wide array of restrictive measures hinder the exercise of legal rights to form civil society associations and their ability to operate. Arab laws and constitutions generally do not mandate discrimination between citizens on the basis of language, religion, doctrine, or confession, but discrimination against women continues to be evident in the legal codes of some Arab countries.

(f) *Gender equity*

Gender equity and its incorporation into development planning processes was one of the main social issues identified in the stakeholder survey.

Some Arab countries have made considerable progress in improving the education of women, fertility rates, life expectancy and per capita income, and in strengthening the role of women in government.

However, women's economic activity remains low by international standards and in many cases their involvement in public life and politics remains weak. Women's participation in the labour force tends to be restricted to traditional female roles, and in some Arab countries, political representation in national parliaments by women remains very limited.

In some Arab societies violence against women is prevalent and often goes unreported in a male-oriented culture of denial. Aggression against women is particularly acute in countries suffering from armed conflicts.

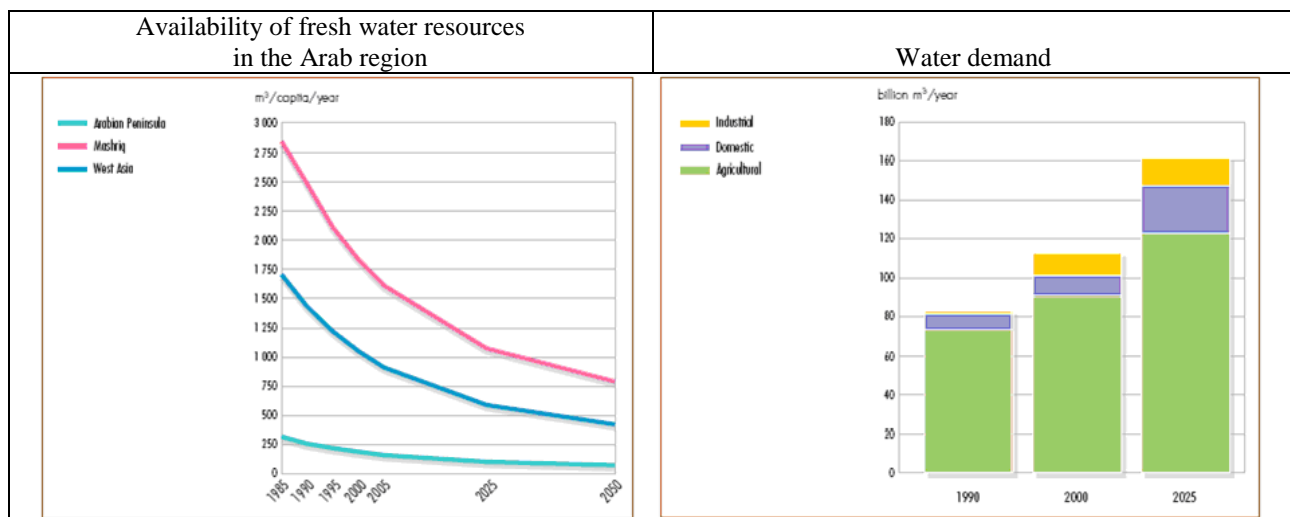
3. The environmental dimension of sustainable development

The stakeholder survey identified water resources, water quality, desertification, solid waste, energy and climate change as the highest priority environmental issues in the Arab region. These and other issues have been well documented in many recent reports, including UNEP's Global Environment Outlook,²⁵ the ESCWA Water Development Reports²⁶ and the AFED Arab Environment Reports.²⁷ The following sections summarize the main environmental issues identified in these and other reports.

(a) Water resources and quality

The state of water resources in most Arab countries is already precarious and is expected to deteriorate owing to climate change and population growth (see figure III). Some two-thirds of the sources of surface water originate outside the region and are subject to potential or actual transboundary disputes. Groundwater sources are overexploited in many of the countries, with extraction rates exceeding replenishment. Water tables have fallen significantly and there is extensive intrusion of saline water in coastal areas. Water pollution is exacerbated by increasing discharges of domestic and industrial waste water and agricultural chemicals. It has been estimated that by 2015 the region as a whole will be suffering from severe water scarcity.

Figure III. Per capita freshwater availability and demand



Source: UNEP 2007

²⁵ UNEP, *Global Environment Outlook 4: Environment for Development*, (2007).

²⁶ ESCWA, *Water Development Report 1: Vulnerability of the Region to Socio-Economic Drought; Water Development Report 2: State of Water Resources in the ESCWA Region; Water Development Report 3: Role of Desalination in Addressing Water Scarcity* (2005, 2007, 2009).

²⁷ Arab Forum for Environment and Development, *Arab Environment: Future Challenges; Climate Change; Water* (2008, 2009, 2010).

Water use is dominated by agriculture, which utilizes about 85 per cent of the water resources. Irrigation efficiency is generally low, at about 30 per cent compared with a world average of 45 per cent. Inefficient use and over-abstraction are encouraged by the extensive use of subsidies.

Several Arab countries now rely heavily on desalination for the bulk of their municipal and industrial water needs, using energy obtained from fossil fuels. Some use desalinated water for crop irrigation. Effluents from desalination plants contribute to increased salinity and higher temperatures of seawater in coastal areas. The prospects for environmentally sustainable desalination depend largely on new technologies and the use of solar energy.

(b) *Coastal degradation, desertification and biodiversity*

Coastal zones already support much of the region's population and are increasingly affected by urbanization, industrialization, tourism and the oil industry. In many areas this has led to acute local pollution and damage to tourism and recreational assets, as well as to marine biodiversity.

Desertification and soil erosion are a major concern in many of the countries, influenced by weak land-use controls and inappropriate agricultural practices. The impacts of land degradation include a reduction in agricultural productivity, increased risk of natural hazards and loss of terrestrial biodiversity.

Much of the region's flora and fauna is damaged or threatened. Factors impacting regional biodiversity include population growth, over-exploitation, agriculture, over-fishing, urbanization, industry, poverty, drought and climate change. Protected areas have been established in many Arab countries, leading to some significant successes in slowing or even reversing deforestation.

(c) *Urban environment, waste management and industrial pollution*

Rapid growth of the region's urban population has created considerable environmental stress in many cities, particularly in the lower income countries, along with health risks for poorer sections of society. Municipal and industrial effluents are often discharged into watercourses without treatment.

Sanitary waste disposal is largely lacking in many parts of the region, especially in rural areas and the poorer areas of major cities. Waste is often left in unsanitary dumps that are home to disease carriers and vermin. Combustion of waste, which may be deliberate or spontaneous, creates noxious smoke. Moreover, industrial hazardous waste is often inadequately treated and can be a major threat to human health.

Only a few Arab countries monitor air pollution systematically and consistently which makes scientific research and policy recommendations difficult. In most of the region's large cities, the principal source of air pollution is vehicle emissions due to increasingly heavy motor traffic, ageing and poorly maintained vehicles, low-quality fuels and poor traffic conditions. Cement factories and other large scale facilities located close to urban centres may produce high local levels of particulates and other pollutants.

Air pollution in rural areas is generally low, but high local levels of particulates can arise from activities such as quarrying, stone crushing and cement manufacture.

(d) *Adaptation to climate change*

The Arab region is one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Anticipated risks include decreasing rainfall, particularly in the Mediterranean region, sea-level rise, higher frequency and intensity of floods and drought, deforestation, increased water scarcity, deterioration of water quality, reduced agricultural productivity and increasing threats to food security, and increased migration.

The region is ill-prepared to deal with these challenges. There are few reliable records on climate patterns in the region, and data collection and research on the potential impacts on health, infrastructure, biodiversity, tourism, water, and food production are sparse. Few studies have been conducted on the economic impacts. Urgent action is needed to incorporate climate change adaptation into research programmes and development strategies.

4. *The institutional dimension of sustainable development*

(a) *Institutional elements*

As identified in ESCWA's 2003 review, efforts to strengthen institutions and institutional arrangements for the governance of sustainable development in the Arab region must aim at improving inter-ministerial coordination, institutionalizing public consultation, facilitating processes of governance for sustainable development and strengthening key institutions. To these ends the review made four recommendations:

- To create a High Council for Sustainable Development in each country to serve as an inter-ministerial forum;
- To establish an NCSD as a forum for non-governmental stakeholders;
- To appoint a sustainable development advisor to the Prime Minister; and
- To strengthen each country's national environmental agency.

With regard to the extent that these recommendations have been implemented in Arab countries, they have fallen short of the intended objectives. We therefore introduce additional recommendations that are complementary to those presented above.

In all countries, in the Arab region as well as elsewhere, government authority and responsibility are delegated to individual ministries. In cases where actions proposed by one ministry may affect the area of responsibility of another, inter-ministerial consultation typically takes place during the planning stage, and any remaining conflicts are resolved at the level of a council of ministers or Prime Minister. Typically, economic development is the responsibility of sectoral ministries, areas such as health, education and social support are administered by their own specialist ministries, and environment ministries are responsible for environmental protection and conservation measures. Because sustainable development embraces economic, social and environmental issues, no individual government department is solely responsible for it. The previous review's proposal for creating a High Council aims to deal with this through a greater degree of inter-ministerial coordination than would normally take place through existing processes. However, the problem remains that no government authority below the level of Prime Minister is responsible for sustainable development as a whole.

As previously discussed, the sustainability of development is critical for development itself, in particular in the Arab countries. Purely economic decisions may be successful in the short term, but in the longer term they may fail to meet countries' own economic objectives if they fail to take full account of key social and environmental issues. Further, emerging proposals for a green economy necessitate a major transformation of the entire national economy. On this basis, it is suggested that responsibilities for sustainable development should be broadened both in sectoral, environmental and social ministries in specific ways. The prime responsibility for concrete action to achieve sustainable development would be placed on sectoral and other ministries that are responsible for economic development. In parallel, the specific responsibility for assisting other ministries in the development of sectoral policies would be placed on environmental and social ministries. Potential mechanisms for doing so are discussed below.

(b) *Avenues for institutional reform*²⁸

The integration of environmental and social issues into sectoral planning and decision-making requires a high level of expertise in the relevant disciplines. We therefore propose that each sectoral ministry should include a sustainable development department responsible for incorporating environmental and social issues in formulating the ministry's policies and plans. In doing so they would be required to take full account of issues identified by environmental and social ministries. Environmental and social ministries would take on additional responsibilities for issuing professional and technical guidance on the environmental and social aspects of sectoral planning.

The office of the Prime Minister or its equivalent would play a central role by making it mandatory for sectoral ministries to address environmental and social issues in their policies and plans, and through an oversight and review process which ensures that, in doing so they have taken proper account of the advice given to them by the specialist ministries. Consideration may also be given to introducing formal requirements for the evaluation of sectoral policies and plans prior to approval, for example through strategic environmental assessment and related techniques.

Within this proposed framework, environment ministries' responsibilities for environmental protection and conservation would remain unchanged. In particular, those activities in which an environment ministry acts as a regulator or inspector would remain strictly independent of sectoral ministries. Similar considerations would also apply to the responsibilities of social ministries.

The High Council for Sustainable Development recommended in the previous review would play a supportive role within this framework. As suggested previously, the High Council would provide a regular mechanism for consultation between governmental institutions engaged in sustainable development and lead the development of an NSDS. Other roles suggested in the previous review would no longer be needed.

In some countries, the High Council might itself be the principal vehicle for institutionalizing public consultation within the process of developing and implementing the NSDS. In other cases it may be more appropriate to adopt the previous review's recommendation to assign this role to a separate NCSD.

(c) *National strategy structures*

As discussed in chapter III, progress in formulating an umbrella NSDS in Arab countries remains limited. Furthermore, many NSDSs that have been developed tend to focus primarily on environmental management attaching, limited attention to the economic dimension of sustainable development. As a consequence, many sustainable development strategies have been unable to foster effective coordination between government departments and have lacked effective mechanisms for implementation.

ESCWA's 2003 review recommended that these major shortcomings be addressed through the High Council for Sustainable Development, which would have the authority to develop an overarching NSDS and to present, coordinate and update sector strategies and work programmes based on it. This approach may be regarded as the ideal implementation of the NSDS concept as envisaged in Agenda 21, in which the NSDS would be a country's prime strategy document for development planning. However, this ideal is beyond anything that has yet been achieved elsewhere. Even the European Union fails to achieve such a high level of integration. Its overarching strategy document is not its sustainable development strategy, but the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs and its successor, Europe 2020. Europe's sustainable development strategy is a parallel strategy document which is taken into account by the European Commission and Member States when formulating their policies. Individual Member States follow a similar approach, having an overarching

²⁸ The institutional framework suggested in this section closely parallels the regulatory impact assessment procedures applied in many countries, and in particular, the impact assessment procedures used by the European Commission. In this case, the oversight role is fulfilled by the European Commission's Impact Assessment Board.

development strategy and a parallel NSDS that is taken into account in policy formulation. While this approach may be less than ideal in respect of the aims of Agenda 21, we consider that it would be overambitious to expect Arab countries to achieve a greater degree of integration at this stage of their development.

We therefore propose that all Arab countries adopt an approach that is broadly similar to the Tunisian example discussed above, but only if it can be ensured that participation at all levels is serious and reflective. A country's NSDS would remain distinct from its overarching development strategy, which would continue to be developed through existing strategic planning processes with support from the NSDS process. The NSDS would become the principal vehicle through which environmental and social issues are incorporated more fully into the overarching development strategy. In particular, the NSDS would highlight those areas where the country's existing pattern of economic development is considered to be environmentally unsustainable or inappropriate with regard to social impacts, and identify actions that could be taken to rectify this. The NSDS would, for example, highlight any relevant issues that have been discussed in the previous sections of this report and propose actions through which the transformation to a green economy might be achieved. Where practicable, the NSDS would be informed by in-depth economic and financial studies of its own proposals. Where this is not practicable, it should identify studies that would need to be carried out in the process of evaluating those proposals.

In many countries, strategic development planning follows a five-year cycle. We recommend that a country's NSDS should follow the same cycle, timed to feed into the process of formulating and updating the country's overarching development strategy.

(d) *Regional processes*

ESCWA's 2003 review recommended the development of a regional strategy and plan of action for the effective implementation of the Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development. It was intended that the strategy would prioritize regional goals on sustainable development and that the plan of action would identify implementing mechanisms for achieving those goals. Within the League of Arab States, CAMRE and JCEDAR have continued to provide forums for discussing the environmental dimension of sustainable development, but there is not yet an effective institutional mechanism for issuing regional policies that address the full breadth of sustainable development.

The 2003 review argued that a regional mechanism of this nature can only be effective if it is rooted in national sustainable development institutions, which would need to be created first. Beyond this, the lack of regional economic integration is considered an even bigger barrier. Until Arab countries have developed a regional approach to strategic economic planning, it will be impossible to develop a regional approach to integrated planning for sustainable development. In the meantime, any cooperative action on regional environmental issues that is agreed through CAMRE and JCEDAR would continue to provide important input to the environmental component of NSDSs and consequently for each country's overall development strategy. The same would apply to any regional agreement on social issues that may be developed in other cooperative forums.

As discussed above and as stated during the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting on Rio+20, there is an urgent need for greater economic integration in the region and in particular for a regional approach to the green economy. Transition to this approach will occur gradually and in accordance with the socio-economic characteristics of Arab States, through the adoption of appropriate policies. The approach should be considered as a tool for achieving sustainable development and not a substitute for it. This may not require any new institutions, but would depend on the revitalization of existing ones, such as the Council for Arab Economic Unity. In the absence of comprehensive regional economic integration of this nature, agreements reached by existing regional institutions addressing specific aspects of economic development would still provide important input to each country's own development strategy, and also to its NSDS. In particular, this would apply to regional cooperative action on renewable energy or water resources.

A more integrated regional approach to strategic sustainable development planning may become practicable in the future once a sufficient level of economic integration has been achieved. This would enable the creation of an Arab development strategy that aims to capitalize on the region's unique characteristics and strengthen its position in the global economy. It would then be appropriate to develop a regional sustainable development strategy as the principal vehicle for incorporating regional environmental and social issues into that overarching strategy. At present, however, in the absence of greater regional economic integration, we consider that any attempt to develop a fully integrated regional sustainable development strategy would not be appropriate.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

With a view to assisting Arab countries in their preparations for Rio+20 and beyond, we propose a new approach to strengthening their governance institutions for sustainable development. The proposals developed in the previous sections are summarized below as recommendations for consideration.

1. *Institutional elements*

(a) The prime responsibility for concrete action to achieve sustainable development should be placed on the sectoral ministries and other ministries that are responsible for economic development;

(b) The specific responsibility of assisting other ministries in the development of sectoral policies should be placed on environmental and social ministries.

2. *Avenues for institutional reform*

(a) Each sectoral ministry should include a sustainable development department responsible for incorporating environmental and social issues in the formulation of the ministry's policies and plan;

(b) In formulating their policies and plans, each sectoral ministry should be required to take full account of issues identified by environmental and social ministries;

(c) Environmental and social ministries should be given specific responsibilities for issuing professional and technical guidance on the environmental and social aspects of sectoral planning;

(d) The office of the Prime Minister or its equivalent should make it mandatory for sectoral ministries to address environmental and social issues in their policies and plans;

(e) The office of the Prime Minister or its equivalent should implement an oversight and review process which ensures that the policies and plans developed by sectoral ministries have taken proper account of the advice given by the specialist ministries;

(f) Consideration should be given to introducing formal requirements for the evaluation of sectoral policies and plans prior to approval, for example through strategic environmental assessment and related techniques;

(g) Environment ministries' responsibilities for environmental protection and conservation should remain unchanged. In particular, those activities in which an environment ministry acts as a regulator or inspector should continue to be carried out strictly independent of sectoral ministries;

(h) Similar independence should be retained by social ministries in policy areas where they act as regulator or inspector;

- (i) A High Council for Sustainable Development or its equivalent should be established to provide a regular mechanism for consultation between governmental institutions engaged in sustainable development;
- (j) The High Council for Sustainable Development or its equivalent should lead the development of a NSDS;
- (k) A formal mechanism should be introduced for institutionalizing public consultation within the process of developing and implementing the NSDS.

3. National strategy structures

- (a) National strategic planning processes should be strengthened where necessary to develop an overarching development strategy that provides a framework for all sectoral policies and plans. This overarching strategy should be reviewed and revised regularly, typically on a five-year cycle;
- (b) The NSDS should be adopted as the principal vehicle through which environmental and social issues are incorporated into the overarching development strategy;
- (c) The NSDS should highlight those areas where the country's existing pattern of economic development is considered to be environmentally unsustainable or inappropriate with regard to social impacts and identify actions that may be taken to rectify this;
- (d) Where practicable, the NSDS should be informed by in-depth economic and financial studies of its own proposals. Where this is not practicable, it should identify studies that would need to be carried out in the process of evaluating those proposals;
- (e) The NSDS should be reviewed and revised on a five-year cycle, timed to feed into the process of formulating and updating the overarching development strategy.

4. Regional processes

- (a) Urgent attention should be given to the development of a regional approach to strategic economic planning;
- (b) In parallel, formal mechanisms should be introduced to ensure that cooperative action on regional environmental and/or social issues agreed through existing mechanisms (e.g. CAMRE and JCEDAR) is incorporated into the environmental and social components of NSDSs, and hence into each country's overarching development strategy;
- (c) The Joint Committee for Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) should be renamed as the Joint Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in the Arab Region. Membership would include representatives of stakeholders in the three (economic, social and environmental) pillars of sustainable development;
- (d) Urgent attention should be given to economic integration in the region, for example through the revitalization of the Council for Arab Economic Unity;
- (e) Top priority should be given to formalizing a regional approach to the green economy and to regional cooperative action on renewable energy and water resources;
- (f) Once a sufficient level of regional economic integration has been achieved, consideration should be given to the creation of an Arab development strategy which capitalizes on the region's unique characteristics and aims to strengthen its position in the global economy. It would then be appropriate to develop a regional sustainable development strategy as the principal vehicle for incorporating environmental and social issues into the region's overall development strategy.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite significant improvements since the 1992 Earth Summit and the 2002 WSSD, governance institutions in the Arab countries still falls short of what is necessary to achieve sustainable development in the region. The goal of integrating economic, social and environmental issues in development decision-making has been expressed in numerous regional declarations, but concrete actions to achieve it have been limited. Recent global developments, including the emergence of climate change as a major priority, the threat of rising food prices, the global economic crisis and the growing influence of emerging economies have all intensified the need for a regional approach to development that can deliver key economic and social objectives in the face of major environmental constraints.

This report has reviewed the conceptual framework for sustainable development in Arab countries and globally, developments in the institutional framework, mechanisms for operationalizing sustainable development, and means of strengthening governance for sustainable development. It has identified several success stories in Arab countries, including promising approaches to strategic planning for sustainable development and the development of non-governmental institutional capacity. Potentially effective initiatives for the promotion of a green economy have been highlighted, offering major opportunities for strengthening the region's economic development and delivering its social objectives.

A proposed new approach to strengthening institutions for sustainable development in Arab countries has been developed, beginning with a discussion on the region's future economic development and then examining the issues that must be addressed to make this environmentally sustainable and successful in terms of social impact. The report concluded with a set of recommendations for institutional reforms allowing environmental and social issues to be more fully integrated into economic decision-making and the sustainable development of the region to become a practical proposition.

Annex I

OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP ON THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION (JEDDAH, 3-5 OCTOBER 2011)

As part of a series of national and regional preparatory meetings for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) targeting various stakeholders, the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment in Saudi Arabia, together with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Environment Programme and the League of Arab States, organized an important workshop aiming to discuss with sustainable development institutions in the Arab region the needed reforms to the international framework for sustainable development (IFSD) at the national, regional and global levels in light of new and emerging challenges. Moreover, the Workshop assumed the role of a validating forum for the review contained in the parent document.

A highlight of the Workshop was the discussion on the existing institutional framework in the Arab region at the national and regional levels, its strengths and weaknesses, and possible reforms to address emerging challenges in the face of sustainable development. Moreover, the purpose of the Workshop was to help Arab countries position themselves with regard to the issue of international environmental governance (which is being negotiated as part of Rio+20), building on the outcomes of the Solo Dialogue;

As a final output, the Workshop produced several recommendations for the IFSD, including: (a) balanced consideration of the three pillars of sustainable development; (b) addressing gaps in existing institutional frameworks to meet the needs of all countries; (c) enhanced coordination among international frameworks at all levels and among United Nations bodies; (d) civil society participation at all levels; and (e) inclusion of international donor bodies. The workshop proposed changing the names of regional bodies to include sustainable development in their titles, such as:

- The Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region should be renamed as the Joint Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in the Arab Region. Membership would include representatives of stakeholders in the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental);
- The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment should be renamed as the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment and Sustainable Development;
- Both substantive (social and economic) committees of the Economic and Social Council should be merged into one committee that would represent the three dimensions of sustainable development so that representation on the committee would reflect the sectors relevant to those dimensions;
- The Arab Economic and Social Ministerial Council should be renamed as the Arab Ministerial Council for Sustainable Development.

Annex II

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ARAB REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING ON RIO+20 (CAIRO, 16-17 OCTOBER 2011)

On 16-17 October 2011, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Environment Programme and the League of Arab States organized the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012.

The two-day meeting involved representatives from the Arab countries and stakeholders from Arab institutions discussing the main issues related to Rio+20. They produced a set of recommendations on institutions for sustainable development that partially endorsed the suggestions in the review contained in the parent document, but also expressed some specific recommendations and statements as follows:

1. The international framework for sustainable development (IFSD) is not an end in itself. It is linked to the nature of the decisions that will be agreed upon during Rio+20. It should address the three dimensions of sustainable development and should not result in imposing any additional burdens on developing countries or create trade obstacles or conditionalities on them.
2. There is a need to focus on the integrated and comprehensive approach to sustainable development along its three dimensions, strengthen the existing international institutional framework with a view to addressing its gaps, as well as work towards establishing and strengthening the IFSD at both the national and regional levels.
3. The IFSD should not use environmental considerations as barriers or conditions for providing development assistance.
4. There is a need to strengthen and establish National Councils for Sustainable Development with a clear structure and terms of reference that enhance their ability to implement sustainable development strategies, plans and programmes.
5. At the international level, focus should be placed on (a) activating available mechanisms and existing institutions to address the shortcomings in coordination and ensure cooperation and the optimum use of available resources (particularly already scarce financial resources) prior to considering of the creation of new institutions; and (b) reactivating, strengthening and enhancing existing institutional structures for sustainable development at the regional level, including regional commissions such as ESCWA and regional offices such as the United Nations Environment Programme.
6. The IFSD should aim to enhance coordination among international, regional and national frameworks as well as support coordination and coherence among the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system.

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