



The Arab Ministerial Declaration on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

We, the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment,

Recognizing the need to update the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region at the national and regional levels, as a tool to improve the life of Arab citizens and their standard of living, to enhance work and training opportunities for Arab youth, who constitute the pillar and future of the Arab world, and to develop national and regional institutional frameworks that enhance regional cooperation to achieve sustainable development,

Recognizing the interest of our peoples and States, the importance of innovation, education and the reinforcement of knowledge management as pillars for building the future, the need to improve the management of our institutions and the integration of our efforts, and to adopt multilateral partnerships leading to sustainable development under a global economic system accessible to all and based on justice and equality,

Recalling the Millennium Development Goals (2000), the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region (2004), the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (2007), the Kuwait Declaration on Elevating the Standard of Living of Arab Citizens (2009), and the Eye on Earth Summit Declaration on the exchange of environmental information (2011),

Recalling the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Agenda 21 for the Conservation and Management of Resources for Development, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol and the commitments they include, Marrakech Agreement 2001, International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey Consensus) 2001, outcomes of the International Summit for Sustainable Development 2002, and Doha Declaration on Financing for Development 2004,

Referring to all the regional preparatory meetings, including the outcomes of the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) (League of Arab State Headquarters, 16-17 October 2011),

Affirming the importance of drafting a practical future vision to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region that is implementable and subject to monitoring, follow up and evaluation, and is based on specific indicators for the coming twenty years (2012-2032),

Stressing the need to re-establish balance between the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in order to eradicate poverty and hunger, reduce diseases, promote education, training and health care, raise awareness, cultivate the culture of professional safety, increase investments to create more job opportunities for youth and enhance social integration to include all societal groups, empower Arab women to undertake an effective role in all aspects of political, economic and social life to build the Arab society, and facilitate the participation of all Arab citizens in decision-making processes,

Noting that the impacts of natural disasters require integrated efforts to reduce the risks and respond to emergencies to avoid human, economic, social and environmental losses, which requires Arab and international cooperation to achieve sustainable development,

Underlining that the Rio+20 Conference is centred on sustainable development in terms of the economic, social and environmental pillars, and that a specific and clear definition of a green economy has not been established, which limits its relevance in achieving sustainable development;

Reaffirming the importance of strengthening partnerships between developed and developing countries based on better cohesion and harmony between monetary, financial and commercial systems, increasing international cooperation to alleviate foreign debt burdens on developing countries, and enhancing regional developmental and complementary frameworks including the Greater Arab Free Trade Area,

Warning of the implications of the establishment of a unified global development model, in light of the different development levels including among the Arab States, as this will affect economic growth, social development and the preservation of environment, and consequently the achievement of sustainable development,

Aware of the need to enhance the institutional framework for environment and sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels and establish a mechanism for evaluating, monitoring, following up and implementing what has been agreed upon in previous international conferences and what will be agreed upon in the future;

Taking into account the significant progress achieved by Arab countries in sustainable development areas in particular the Millennium Development Goals, especially those related to education, health and the environment,

Noting the current persisting challenges, in particular to eradicate poverty, create jobs, achieve the ambitions of youth, the right to development, social cohesion, the rights of women, the right to obtain information, to liberalize trade to guarantee a fair share for developing countries, to transfer and localize technology, finance mechanisms, and build capacity in the different fields of sustainable development,

Reaffirming the principles of justice, equity, participation, transparency, accountability and the involvement of all,

We declare our determination to strive to achieve the following:

(1) Reaffirm our political commitment to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region and make all necessary efforts based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities;

(2) Reaffirm the importance of the Rio principles in achieving sustainable development, refuse any attempt to compromise or renegotiate these principles, and insist that any future agreements on sustainable development be based on those principles;

(3) Continue to implement sustainable development strategies, plans and programmes at the national and regional levels in particular the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, to build on the progress made in its implementation, face current challenges, fill the gaps and update the Initiative when needed, in the light of emerging and new challenges that the Arab region may face, including climate change and its risks, the global financial crisis and its impacts and the repercussions of political developments in the Arab region;

(4) Emphasize the need to evaluate the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of major global conferences on sustainable development notably the Rio Conference (1992) and Johannesburg Conference (2002), to identify the challenges and the implementation gaps and set plans and programmes to face emerging and new challenges, provide necessary financing, transfer technologies and build the needed capacities for implementation at the national, regional and international levels;

(5) Request developed countries to fulfil their commitments and obligations included in the outcomes of United Nations summits and conferences, including Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, Monterrey Consensus, and the ensuing rights of developing countries. We stress that one of the main factors hindering the achievement of sustainable development in developing countries since the Rio Conference of 1992 is the failure of developed countries to meet the commitments included in the decisions of previous summits and conferences, and we reaffirm that no additional commitments or burdens should be borne by developing countries;

(6) Reaffirm the need to implement the United Nations General Assembly resolution issued in 1970 calling for the allocation of 0.7 per cent of the national income of developed countries to official development assistance;

(7) Reaffirm the need for developed countries to fulfil the commitment to support developing countries to achieve sustainable development by providing adequate funds to support the transfer and localization of appropriate technology and enable developing countries to develop their own technologies and build capacities in line with their national priorities;

(8) Request that the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, if sustainable development goals are set, to adopt similar implementation mechanisms and standards to those adopted for the Millennium Development Goals, and to define timeframes for implementation ensuring adherence to the Rio principles, notably the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities;

(9) Focus on a comprehensive and integrated vision of sustainable development along its three dimensions and enhance the existing international institutional framework to fill existing gaps and achieve balance, and encourage the establishment of national councils for sustainable development with a clear mandate and structure to enhance their capacity to implement sustainable development strategies, plans and programmes and support the efforts of the League of Arab States to develop an effective regional mechanism aimed to achieve sustainable development in the region;

(10) Reaffirm our belief that any update to the institutional framework for sustainable development should address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and should not entail additional burdens or impose obstacles or technical and trade barriers on developing countries;

(11) Reaffirm the importance of establishing an effective partnership with the private sector, civil society organizations, community-based institutions, youth, women, people with disabilities, elderly and children in order to achieve sustainable development;

(12) Urge the international community to work on achieving equality and justice in development between developing and developed countries, achieve equity between generations and establish appropriate monitoring mechanisms at the national and international levels;

(13) Reaffirm also that green economy, as an international concept, should be defined and developed at the national level in line with national sustainable development objectives and priorities, and should be considered a tool to achieve sustainable development rather than an alternative concept, and the need to evaluate the opportunities and challenges linked to this concept and the means required for its implementation, in particular in terms of providing necessary funding and support to developing countries;

(14) Respect the sovereignty of States and peoples over their natural resources and reaffirm the need to avoid additional barriers or commitments that could hamper exports or productive activities to achieve sustainable development, and stress the importance of removing trade barriers in developed countries to facilitate the flow of goods and services in developing countries according to the Doha Round of trade negotiations;

(15) Avoid the use of the concept of green economy as a unified model applicable to all, as a pretext to create trade barriers and environmental standards that are difficult to implement, as a basis or precondition for States to obtain financial support and aid, as a means to restrict the right of developing countries to utilize their natural resources according to their developmental priorities or as a tool to exempt developed countries from honouring their commitments towards developing countries;

(16) Reaffirm the principle of gradual transition to a green economy as defined and developed at the national level in line with national sustainable development objectives and priorities, according to the socioeconomic specificities of each country, and adopt the appropriate policies in this regard;

(17) Support the efforts aimed at achieving peace and security in the Arab region, including efforts to end occupation, renounce threat of aggression and interference in internal affairs of States guided by legitimate international decisions on a fair basis to enhance sustainable development, protect the environment and natural resources of people under occupation and aggression according to principle 23 of the Rio Declaration, and rebuild the socioeconomic infrastructure destroyed by occupation;

(18) Reaffirm the necessity of enhancing and strengthening Arab regional integration to achieve sustainable development;

(19) Support and establish sustainable development data and information networks to support the process of decision-making, and the establishment of a regional information system to support Arab initiatives in this field and promulgate their use in decision-making;

(20) Focus on the social dimension to achieve social justice, create new job opportunities in different public and private sectors to counteract the so-called “brain drain”, particularly impacting youth in view of the social and political transformations in the region, which constitute an opportunity to reconsider development priorities;

(21) Reaffirm the historical responsibility of developed countries as to climate change and the need for them to fulfil their commitments towards developing countries to adapt to climate change and the adverse effects stemming from the adaptation measures and the implications on the social and economic sectors, in addition to food security, water security, increasing drought and desertification, biodiversity and land degradation, natural disasters and extreme events (sand storms, heat waves and floods), diseases, epidemics and so on;

(22) Express deep concern for the implications of the global economic and financial crisis on developing countries and the impasse in the ongoing negotiations of the Doha Round and call for the agreement on a fair international trade system to assist developing countries in obtaining sufficient resources to finance their efforts to achieve sustainable development and reach a solution for the problem of foreign debts including for countries emerging from conflicts;

(23) Reaffirm the right of Arab countries to diversify energy sources including new and renewable energy and nuclear energy for peaceful uses to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region and commend the achievements that have been made so far;

(24) Reaffirm the importance of providing more basic services and infrastructure such as water, sanitation, health and education in view of the recent rise in population and unprecedented rate of urbanization, which requires additional efforts and financial resources to achieve development goals, taking the fair distribution of resources and services into account;

(25) Emphasize the need to include sustainable development concepts in scholastic curricula and extracurricular activities to raise the awareness of the rising generation of the importance of the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources;

(26) Stress the importance of protecting public health and improving it within the process of sustainable development.