Sixth Expert Group Meeting of the
Regional Initiative for the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR)

Opening Statement of Ms. Carol Chouchani Cherfane, Chief
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Ms. Shahira Wehbi, Distinguished Representative of the League of Arab States,
Mr. Anders Jägerskog, Distinguished Representative of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency,
Distinguished Delegates from Arab Member States,
Esteemed Experts from the RICCAR Partner Organizations,
Dear Representatives from National, Regional and International Organizations,

I am honoured to welcome you to this Expert Group Meeting of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), which is the sixth in the series of annual meetings that have been convened in support of this Regional Initiative since October 2009.

As many of you are aware, RICCAR is implemented through a collaborative partnership involving the League of Arab States and its specialized organs, United Nations organizations serving the Arab region, as well as international expert institutions, which comprises 11 partner organizations, namely the LAS, ACSAD, ESCWA, FAO, GIZ, SMHI, UNEP/ROWA, UNESCO/Cairo Office, UNISDR, UNU-INWEH and the WMO. Three additional climate change research institutes have also joined the initiative by contributing climate modelling projections for the Arab Domain, namely the Climate Service Center 2.0 in Germany, the Center of Excellence for Climate Change Research at the King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in the KSA, and the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) also in the KSA.

Funding for the initiative is provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the in-kind and financial contributions of the RICCAR Partner Organizations and Contributing Research Institutes. Thanks are extended to Sida for funding this meeting, and to the partners implementing the Sida-funded project that supports this Regional Initiative who contributed to the organization of this meeting, namely the LAS, ACSAD, ESCWA, SMHI, UNISDR and the WMO.
This Sixth Expert Group Meeting will review the progress achieved in implementing the Regional Initiative and discuss next steps for finalizing its integrated assessment for the Arab region. Specifically, it will:

(a) Review the progress achieved on the Regional Initiative.
(b) Present the regional climate modelling results for the Arab Domain, including trends related to extreme weather events indices.
(c) Consider the preliminary hydrological modelling results that assess the impact of climate change on freshwater resources, with particular focus on shared water resources.
(d) Review the five sectors included in the integrated vulnerability assessment and their associated indicators related to exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity.
(e) Report on sector-specific activities focused on agriculture, disasters and environmental health as they relate to climate change.
(f) Discuss progress and next steps related to the establishment of a Regional Knowledge Hub and an Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF).

Distinguished participants,

I would like to take this opportunity to stress on the importance of the intergovernmental and inter-agency collaborative process embedded in RICCAR and its aim to build a regional scientific knowledge base to inform policy dialogue, priority-setting and planning for climate change adaptation in the Arab region. The outputs and processes launched under the Regional Initiative are informing regional processes supported by the League of Arab States, as well as global processes, such as the Arab preparations for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP-20 negotiations currently underway in Peru, and the collaborative work being pursued to generated projections for the Arab Domain under the Coordinated Regional Downscaling Experiment (CORDEX) supported by the WMO’s World Climate Research Programme.

We are also pleased to report during this meeting on new avenues of analysis being pursued at the sector-level under RICCAR, which are being supported by the GIZ, FAO, ACSAD and UNU-INWEH, and which will build upon the RICCAR regional climate modelling and hydrological modelling findings being coordinated by SMHI.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank again Sida for their continuous support of this Regional Initiative and extend my gratitude to all the RICCAR Partners and Contributing Research Institutions their fruitful cooperation and their valuable contributions to this collaborative initiative. Finally, I extend my sincere appreciation to the distinguished representatives of the Arab Member States for their participation in this EGM and for the key role they play in implementing and ensuring follow-up to this important Regional Initiative.

I wish you a productive meeting and a pleasant stay in Cairo.

Thank you.