The total surface area of the Arab region is around 14.2 million km². Ninety (90) percent of this area is hyper-arid or desert. The remaining is dry land located within arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones and characterized by a harsh climate, water scarcity and rapidly degrading land resources. The use of inefficient practices – e.g., over-grazing, over-exploitation and inefficient use of water resources, deforestation and land mismanagement – are the main causes of land degradation, which in this region is synonymous to desertification and is leading to substantial economic losses. Preventing desertification is a necessity, which will require a holistic approach to land and water resources management.
Due to its geographical location, the Arab region has vast areas that are inhospitable to human settlements or agricultural activities as a result of limited rainfall and high temperatures.

90% of the Arab land is hyper arid with an aridity index of less than 0.05. While the remaining 10% is characterized as arid, semi-arid or dry sub-humid, it is also referred to as dry-land, with an aridity index of less than 0.65;

It is this last 10% of the land that constitutes one of the foundation pillars for socio-economic development in the region;

Land degradation affects more than 70% of the cultivable land;

Land degradation factors in the region include:

- Overgrazing (e.g., there are now four times more sheep in the region than the land can sustain);
- Poor practices and loss of the vegetation, which lead to increased wind and water erosion of the already scarce arable land;
- Over-exploitation and inefficient use of resources, (e.g., excessive groundwater withdrawal, poor irrigation and drainage, salinization, etc.);
- Other factors including widespread urbanization and human settlements, road construction or mining and quarrying all of which encroach on nearby arable land leading to their destruction.

Inappropriate policies (e.g. subsidies) whose effect is compounded by catalyzers such as climatic change, population growth, natural disasters or political tensions.

Decrease in livelihoods and economic development, increase in food insecurity, greater competition for dwindling resources and potential for conflicts.

Need to adopt appropriate integrated measures including among others:

- Developing and implementing sound strategies to mitigate and reverse land degradation;
- Promoting the rational use of resources notably land and water resources;
- Designing appropriate strategies and programmes for sustainable development;
- Raising awareness and building capacity at all levels.

\[\text{The aridity index is a numerical indicator of climate dryness at a given location estimated as the ratio of Precipitation (P) by Potential Evapotranspiration (PET).}\]

