The Arab region is suffering from extreme water scarcity, which is expected to worsen due to the impacts of climate change, climate variability and extreme weather events such as drought, floods, sandstorms and heat waves. These climate impacts on water resources have consequences on water availability for use by other socio-economic and environmental sectors, including human settlements, agriculture, natural ecosystems, industry, energy and human health.

To respond to these challenges the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), and the 25th Ministerial Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) called for an assessment of climate change impacts on the Arab region. This resulted in the launching of the United Nations-League of Arab States Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), which was further endorsed by the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology.

RICCAR is implemented through a collaborative inter-agency partnership involving 11 institutions, namely the LAS, ESCWA, UNEP/ROWA, WMO, ACSAD, UNISDR, GIZ, the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI), FAO, UNESCO/Cairo Office, UNU-INWEH, and three affiliated climate research centres. Funding for the initiative is provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of German (BMZ) and in-kind contributions by the partner organizations. More information on RICCAR is available at: www.escwa.un.org/RICCAR.

RICCAR is based on four pillars aimed at building a regional knowledge base; conducted an integrated regional climate change assessment; strengthening institutional capacities; and raising awareness. In doing so, RICCAR aims to “improve capacity and institution networking for climate change and water resource monitoring and adaptation” and to support the “strengthening and networking of Arab meteorological institutions.” To achieve this, the Sida-funded component of RICCAR being led by the LAS, WMO and ESCWA supports the:

- Strengthening of regional capacity for climate monitoring, predication/projection and knowledge management in the Arab region;
- Establishment of a Regional Climate Outlook Forum (RCOF) under the auspices of the League of Arab States; and
- Set-up of a climate watch system and a regional information centre for data collection, management and archiving of climate data for generating forecasts that can be linked to the regional knowledge hub (RKH) for climate and water.
This work is in turn being informed by activities led by other RICCAR partners on regional climate modelling, hydrological modelling, vulnerability assessment and extreme events. The RKH will facilitate access to data, analysis, and access to climate information and modelling outputs. In this connection, the RKH can support the establishment of the RCOF by providing a knowledge base and platform for the regular review and dissemination of climate predications and projections covering the Arab region.

Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOFs) have been established in many parts of the world with the aim to provide collaboratively developed and consensus-based climate outlooks and related information on a regional scale. These activities inform decision-making and efforts to mitigate climate-related risks and support sustainable development. RCOFs are among the key regional mechanisms supporting the implementation of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS).

The general approach for the establishment of an RCOF includes a pre-RCOF capacity building component for operational climate experts from national meteorological and hydrological services to improve understanding of the regional climate processes; access to and interpretation of global and regional climate prediction products; and capacity building for conducting operational climate prediction and projection at the regional and national scales. This is usually followed by the establishment of a Forum that is convened through regular sessions devoted to the interpretation of the available climate prediction/projection products from global and regional centres; assessment of the modelling skills; development of the consensus climate outlook statement for the region; and discussion on the potential applications of RCOF products.

This scoping meeting to establish an Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF) is organized pursuant to the resolutions adopted by the 30th Meeting of the Arab Permanent Committee on Meteorology (APCM) that took place in Kuwait during March 2014 and which called for conducting a consultation meeting for the establishment of the ArabCOF to discuss the needed actions and institutionalization process for setting it up. A joint WMO-ESCWA proposal was presented during the APCM meeting and discussed with its members for implementation and follow-up actions. The Jordanian Meteorological Department kind offer to host the Scoping Meeting in Amman was welcomed by the Committee.

B. Scope

Pursuant to the resolutions adopted by the 30th Meeting of the Arab Permanent Committee on Meteorology, the Scoping Meeting will discuss the proposed functions of the ArabCOF and the measures to be taken for its establishment. This will include discussing the types of climate services that the RCOF would provide, such as producing climate outlooks for the Arab region and reviewing regional climate change projections and assessments and other services will be presented and discussed during the Scoping Meeting. Measures and mechanisms for the establishment of the Forum will also be discussed.

C. Objectives

The Scoping Meeting seeks to:

- Discuss the ArabCOF establishment, functions, outputs and institutionalization process, including data needs and capacity development requirements;
- Identify the potential partners and liaise with existing initiatives at the regional and sub-regional scales;
- Review and synthesize the available regional climate change information for the Arab Region, including the analysis of regional climate model simulations for the Arab Region performed under RICCAR as well as the IPCC AR5 findings relevant to the Arab Region; and
• Discuss how to utilize the RICCAR RKH to support the management and archiving of climate data for generating forecasts by the ArabCOF, and to act as a regional base for consolidating future projections and predictions for updating existing climate modelling ensembles.

D. ORGANIZATION AND VENUE OF THE MEETING

The meeting is convened under the Patronage of His Excellency, Dr. Abdulla Ensour, Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is organized by the LAS, WMO and ESCWA and hosted by the Jordanian Meteorological Department (JMD) with funding provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) within the framework 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). The meeting will be held in the Landmark Hotel in Amman, Jordan.

E. PARTICIPANTS

The heads of the Arab Meteorological Offices of the 22 Arab Countries or their designated representatives, as well as experts from the RICCAR partner organizations and regional and international climate experts on RCOFs, are invited to participate in the meeting.

F. CORRESPONDENCE

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