Regional Seminar on: “Lessons learnt and Best Practices of the Regional Project on Strengthening the Capacities in the Arab Region to Support Green Production Sectors”

Muscat, Oman, 02-04 December 2014

Information Note

1- Background and justification

At Rio+20 in June 2012, governments agreed that green economy is an important tool for achieving sustainable development. In the Arab region, consultations on green economy affirmed that the transition towards a green economy should generate new job opportunities in green sectors, support the integration between policies targeting water, energy and food security, and mobilize adequate financial resources and facilitate technology transfer. A number of countries in the Arab region have begun implementing significant national green economy initiatives (including the UAE, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia). The importance of an Arab green economy agenda has also been acknowledged by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) of the League of Arab States which requested ESCWA and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to develop a regional green economy investment vision and roadmap.

In a post-Rio+20 context, the Region will need to consider how the transition to a green economy can best be implemented through sustainable development programs and strategies, and what regional mechanisms and initiatives can help build the capacity of governments to develop national policies and leverage financial resources and green technologies.

To support regional and national stakeholders to draft and implement such policies, ESCWA has been leading since 2012, a Development Account project entitled “Strengthening national capacities in the ESCWA region on developing green production sectors”. The project was implemented jointly with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and a number of national public and private institutions. The aim of the project is to build the capacity of policymakers, civil society, business support institutions and industry associations in developing green production sectors in the region through the design and implementation of effective policies and programmes.

One of the main outcomes of the Project has been the establishment of Green Help Desks in the Region to function as “One Stop Shops” and a first interface to support private companies aiming at engaging in green sectors, either by starting a green business or by “greening their activities”. So far, 5 Help Desks have been established and are operational in Lebanon (Association of Lebanese Industrialists), Oman (Public Authority for SMEs Development), Jordan (Royal Scientific Society), Tunisia (Ministry of Environment and Equipment) and Egypt (Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe) while 2 others are in the kick off phase in Iraq and Morocco. The Help Desks support beneficiaries through the provision of information and training on means of reaping the opportunities
emerging from a green economy. (A GHD management guide and operational plans have been developed to support the replication of the GHDs in other countries, which can be accessed on http://www.escwa.un.org/sites/gps/index.asp)

Close cooperation has been also sought with the Cleaner Production Centers, aiming to coordinate and complement efforts in greening the production sectors in the region. The Lebanese Cleaner Production Center was particularly active in this regard.

Another major component of the project consisted of a regional mapping exercise to review and assess existing green policies and programmes in the region for productive sectors development and “green” support services at the international, regional and national levels. The mapping exercise helped determine the needs and opportunities for developing green production sectors through pilot projects and national training activities. Moreover, it has enabled the development of regional guidelines on the formulation of policies and programmes for the development of green production sectors (See http://www.escwa.un.org/sites/gps/index.asp).

ESCWA, in cooperation with the Green Help Desk in Oman, is organizing this final seminar to present to Project partners, donors and other stakeholders the main outcomes of the Project and its role in the transition towards a green economy. The Seminar will also introduce a recently launched ESCWA Project on “Building Capacities in Developing Appropriate Green Technologies for Improving the Livelihood of Rural Communities in the ESCWA Region,” which is a natural continuation of the current one and will build on its outcomes.

2- Objectives and focus areas

The objectives and focus areas of this seminar are mainly the following:

1. Present the main outcomes of the Project on “Strengthening national capacities in the ESCWA region on developing green production sectors”.

2. Discuss further steps and means of ensuring long-term sustainability of the Green Help Desks.

3. Present and discuss with experts and policy makers from the Region the policy guidelines to support green production sectors and the roadmap towards a green economy in the Arab Region.

4. Discuss with partners, donor and stakeholders the potential replication of the project and ways of financing the expansion of the GHD network and up scaling Project outcomes.

5. Discuss regional cooperation and coordination needs to ensure that best practices are shared among the regional stakeholders, including the establishment of a regional umbrella framework for GHDs.

6. Present and discuss with experts the main features of the new ESCWA project on appropriate green technology, and how it can strengthen achievements so far.
3- **Participants**

Participants in this seminar include responsible staff of the existing Green Help Desks, Regional Cleaner Production Centers’ representatives, concerned Ministries, UN agencies, donor agencies and green economy experts together with green entrepreneurs from the region and abroad.

4- **Cooperating partners**

The Seminar is being organized by ESCWA in close cooperation with the GHD in Oman and the Public Authority for SMEs Development in Oman.

5- **Date and venue**

The meeting will be held in Muscat during 02-04 December 2014. The logistical note will be provided to the participants in due time.

6- **Language**

English and Arabic will be the official languages used during the meeting. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided.