



ESCWA



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Federal Institute for  
Geosciences and  
Natural Resources

Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDPD/2011/IC.1/INF.1  
20 May 2011  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the

Draft Legal Framework for Shared Water Resources in the Arab Region  
Beirut, 24-26 May 2011**INFORMATION NOTE****I. BACKGROUND**

The management of shared water resources is an important concern in the Arab region, where most surface and groundwater resources are shared between countries and where the availability of freshwater is becoming increasingly scarce. Efforts to improve shared water resources management stems from the recognition that the management of this vital resource has immediate and long term implications for economic growth, health and social welfare, food self-sufficiency, income and employment, the energy sector, land use management, peace and security, and sustainable development at large in the Arab region. The situation is complicated by the fact that the demand for freshwater is growing, while the quantity and quality of the resource is diminishing.

In recognition of these challenges, the League of Arab States (LAS) established the Arab Ministerial Water Council in 2008. At its first session in 2009, the Council mandated the preparation of a regional water security strategy. At its second session in 2010, the Council called for the preparation of a legal framework for shared waters in the Arab region, which is articulated in the following resolution in which members of the Council:

*“Invite the Center of Water Studies and Arab Water Security and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in coordination with the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) to prepare a draft legal framework on shared waters within the Arab Region for its discussion during the fourth meeting of the Technical Scientific Advisory Committee of the Ministerial Council in January 2011.”*

*- Arab Ministerial Water Council, Session 2, Resolution 20, Item 3*

In support of this resolution, an expert roundtable was organized by the mandated partners in December 2010 and hosted by ESCWA with the support the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) through the ESCWA-BGR Cooperation. The outcomes of this roundtable contributed to the preparation of a background document and a preliminary draft legal framework for discussion, and the joint decision to convene an intergovernmental consultation to discuss these documents. In April 2011, the LAS Center of Water Studies and Arab Water Security reported to the Technical Scientific Advisory Committee of the Arab Ministerial Water Council on progress achieved in implementing the ministerial resolution. Support for the process was subsequently reiterated by the Executive Bureau of the Arab Ministerial Water Council during its third meeting held on 27-28 April 2011, which adopted of the following resolution in which the Bureau:

*“Invite water related authorities in the Arab countries and the specialized Arab organizations to actively participate in the consultative meeting organized by the Center of Water Studies and Arab Water Security and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources in Germany (BGR), to be held in during the period 24-26 May 2011 in Beirut , to discuss the draft legal framework for shared freshwater resources in the Arab region.”*

*- Executive Bureau of the Arab Ministerial Water Council, 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, Resolution 20, Item 4*

## **II. OBJECTIVE OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING**

This intergovernmental consultative meeting brings together Arab Governments, specialized Arab organizations and experts, and the mandated partner organizations to discuss the draft legal framework for shared waters in the Arab region. The objective of the meeting is to foster in a series of interactive discussions on the following issues in view of fostering consensus on a draft legal framework for consideration by the Technical Scientific and Advisory Committee of the Arab Ministerial Water Council:

- a) Rationale and regional specificities for justifying the preparation of a legal framework for shared water resources in the Arab Region;
- b) Scope of the legal framework and the related definitions and technical terminology to be used;
- c) General principles to be included in the legal framework;
- d) Form and function of the legal framework pursued under the umbrella of the League of Arab States, including different types of legal frameworks and institutional arrangements for consideration;
- e) Recommendations and next steps

## **III. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING**

The meeting is an outcome of several recommendations and resolutions adopted through the Arab Ministerial Water Council and is associated bodied. The meeting is implemented by the League of Arab States Center for Water Studies and Arab Water Security and ESCWA in collaboration with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources in Germany (BGR).

Arabic will be the official language of the meeting. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in Arabic and English.

## **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

The three day meeting will be held at United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon from 24 to 26 May 2011. Access to the building is provided from the Riad El-Solh Square entrance. The meeting will take place in MZ meeting room on the MZ floor. A logistical information note is available on the meeting website with additional details (<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1517E>).

## **V. CORRESPONDENCE**

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