Dubai document for the Arab regional implementation of Rio +20

We, the participants in the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-20) - Follow-up from the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) in Dubai on 29-30 May 2013, representatives of Arab countries, regional and international organizations, experts, and representatives of major groups of civil society and other stakeholders

*Ensure that we drive the work in the field of sustainable development in the Arab region at the national and regional levels, in order to achieve sustainable management of natural renewable and non-renewable resources in the region and in particular in the areas of energy, water, and food security, as well as elements of sustainable social and economic growth while providing a decent standard of living for our people, especially in the least developed countries;

* Believe that the human being is at the centre of development and that the eradication of poverty and achieving peace and security are the major challenges faced by the Arab region, and require accelerating the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in the context of regional and international cooperation;

* Retrace the directions and commitments mentioned in the Arab Ministerial Declaration on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio +20" especially the following items (1) emphasise the political commitment to achieve sustainable development, (2) emphasise the Rio Principles and their importance for achieving sustainable development, especially common but differentiated responsibilities, (3) continue to implement the strategies, plans and programs for sustainable development with the update of the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and to build on the progress made in its implementation, and (4) stress the importance of effective partnerships with all groups and stakeholders in achieving sustainable development;


* Specifically recalling paragraphs (1) to (4) of the first chapter of "Our common vision" of "The future we want" which includes the commitment to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions for the benefit of present and future generations and the planet, and that the elimination of poverty, changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, and the protection of natural resources needed for development are essential prerequisites for achieving sustainable development;

Note: Issued without formal editing.
* Also recalling paragraphs (6) and (8) of "Our common vision" which state that people are at the center of sustainable development, and a commitment to work with everyone in order to achieve overall steady economic growth, social development and environmental protection; and emphasize the importance of freedom, peace and security and respect for human rights, including the right to development and to a decent standard of living and the rule of law, gender equality and women's empowerment and commitment to the establishment of fair democratic societies in order to achieve development;

* And we reaffirm paragraph (16) of “The future we want” on all the principles of the Rio Declaration and in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and on work plans for the relevant international conferences, especially Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the "Bali" Strategic Plan to support technology and capacity building, and the commitment to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, "the Istanbul Programme of Action", the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on financing for development;

* Emphasizing what was stated in paragraphs (56), (57) and (58) of "The future we want," which emphasizes that each country has its own approaches and visions and tools to achieve the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced way, which vary depending on their circumstances and national priorities, and that green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is one of the important tools for achieving sustainable development, and provides multiple options for policy makers and not a rigid set of rules. We stress that it should contribute to poverty eradication and employment creation and decent work for all, while maintaining ecosystems and benefitting from national and global initiatives in this area;

* Recalling specifically the resolution in paragraph (84) of ”The future we want” on the establishment of a high-level political forum to replace the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and paragraph (85) on the identification of its responsibilities;

* In the framework of the resolutions set out in paragraphs (87), (88) and (89) from “The future we want” on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the principal body concerned with the environment which determines the Global Plan of Action in this field; and in paragraphs (78), (97) and (100) emphasizing the importance of the role of the regional commissions in ensuring a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development, and support for the efforts of national and regional institutions in this area;

* Recalling paragraphs (245) to (251) of "The future we want" on sustainable development goals, with the establishment of a transparent and inclusive intergovernmental process to develop goals that are coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, and that are action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate and limited in number, universally applicable to all countries, taking into account the national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities; and recognizing the membership of six (6) Arab countries in the open working group for the development of the sustainable development goals as a mechanism which allows consideration to be given to Arab states’ visions and their national and regional priorities for sustainable development;

* And recalling the decisions of the Arab Economic and Social Summit in Riyadh on 21 to 22 January, 2013 regarding the intensification of efforts to update the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and its action plan in light of the outcome from "Rio +20" and the 18th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and inviting Arab states to take the necessary measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects;

* Taking into account the progress achieved by the Arab States in the area of sustainable development and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in education, health and the environment.
Recognizing that the Arab region is changing and that these changes must be taken into account when formulating development programmes, especially since progress varies from country to country within the region and that there are many challenges that still lie ahead particularly in the eradication of poverty and job creation, achieving the aspirations of young people and the right to development, social cohesion and women's rights, the right of access to information and knowledge, and trade liberalization;

* Based on the deliberations and outcomes of the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting which was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in the period of 29-30 May 2013;

We, the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-20) - Follow-up from the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), declare the following:

(1) Work to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development in the Arab region in a balanced manner and make every effort to achieve sustainable development in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, by seeking to strengthen institutional capacity building at national and regional levels and through effective and transparent institutions, and with the participation of all segments of society at all levels. We realize that the restructuring of the institutional organization is consistent with the Rio principles and Agenda 21 is not a goal in itself but a means to achieve sustainable development, taking into account the conditions and the privacy of countries.

(2) Emphasize that the Rio principles, especially common but differentiated responsibilities, are the basis of any agreements related to sustainable development, and emphasize the need to achieve the commitments contained in all the outcomes from international conferences related to sustainable development, the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 "Istanbul Programme of Action", and the Political declaration on Africa’s development needs and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

(3) Emphasize the concept of the right to development for all people and groups which should be in accordance with national priorities and lead to the provision of a decent and generous standard of living for all.

(4) Emphasize the importance of having a high-level political forum with a strong institutional structure under the General Assembly of the United Nations that has all the functions and powers that were vested in the Commission for Sustainable Development and perform all the functions identified by Rio+20 while providing it with all necessary resources, and shall continue to achieve sustainable development in all its aspects and at all levels, and to make decisions through negotiation and be global in nature.

(5) Welcome the initiatives and national strategies in the field of green growth / green development in the Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates strategy for green development, and other similar strategies, and take advantage of green centers to gain access to green development and benefit from the experiences and success stories in the region.

(6) Call for the General Assembly to ensure a balanced representation of all parties in the membership of entities relevant to the work of the high-level political forum for sustainable development, and to ensure active participation in the work of the forum and make decisions which represent the interests of developing countries, including the Arab Group.

(7) Stress that the sustainable development goals which are being developed must take into account: the balance between the three pillars of sustainable development, the Rio principles, especially the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, with the provision of the means of implementation needed to achieve them, in
particular, the provision of funding for developing countries and identifying effective mechanisms to provide opportunities for knowledge and technology transfer and diffusion and capacity building. We stress that the goals be clear, measurable, and science-based and allow for the assessment of progress towards sustainable development, with a continued focus on completing the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals issued by the Millennium Declaration in 2000.

(8) Affirm that the sustainable development goals which will be agreed upon should take into account capacities, policies and national priorities of the States, with due consideration given to international peace and security, poverty eradication, and the sectors of food, energy, water, transportation, the reduction of land degradation, drought and desertification, the maintenance of biodiversity, disaster reduction and emergency preparedness, and waste management which together represent the basic framework for achieving sustainable development, and to give special attention to the development of techniques and systems for water desalination and wastewater treatment, including sanitation and re-use, to bridge the gap between water availability and its use for the purpose of development.

(9) Request the developed countries to fulfill their obligations regarding the rights of developing countries stipulated in the outcomes of summits and conferences organized by the United Nations, including Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Monterrey Consensus, and the "Bali" Strategic Plan to support technology and capacity building.

(10) Respect the sovereignty of nations and people over their natural resources and emphasise the removal of obstacles or obligations limiting exports or production activities that achieve sustainable development, and the importance of removing trade barriers in developed countries in the context of the global trading system, so as to ease the flow of trade, goods and services to and from developing countries in implementation of the Doha Round negotiations.

(11) Urge the development of concepts related to the application of the green economy in line with the conditions, needs and national priorities for sustainable development in all countries, particularly with regard to the eradication of poverty and the adoption of appropriate policies in accordance with the social and economic development characteristics of each country, and the importance of providing funding and support for programs in developing countries in this area.

(12) Emphasize the need to support and meet the challenges faced by poorer and least-developed countries with particular attention to countries in conflict or under occupation, and call for strengthening efforts to achieve peace and security in the Arab region, including an end to the occupation and the threat of aggression and interference in internal States affairs and in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and on a fair basis to promote the path towards sustainable development and protection of the environment and natural resources of people under occupation and aggression, in accordance with principle 23 of the Rio Principles.

(13) Emphasize the importance of the role of the regional commissions and programmes of the United Nations, including the United Nations Environment Programme / Regional Offices, in the active participation in the follow-up to the international processes launched by the "Rio +20" conference and coordination between the countries of the region, and work to ensure a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development and provision of the necessary data and information to enrich the regional discussions around sustainable development, and assist in the development and implementation of programmes. We ask the Secretary-General to provide appropriate resources for the regional commissions to support this role.

(14) Appreciate the effectiveness of the existing partnership between the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Arab League and the United Nations Environment Programme / Regional Office
for West Asia in the field of sustainable development, in order to identify common areas of development at the regional level, particularly in the area of capacity-building, the formulation of conventions, and the exchange of information on successful experiences and lessons learned, and to support the related activities of the Arab ministerial councils and regional activities for international conferences of the United Nations.

(15) Emphasize the principles of Rio +20 on the importance of cooperation with civil society and stakeholders in the follow-up to the implementation of international commitments on various levels. In this context, we appreciate the cooperation between UN organizations, the League of Arab States and civil society organizations in the field of sustainable development.

(16) Request the developed countries to fulfill their obligations in a timely manner to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustainable development by increasing the effectiveness of their Official Development Assistance (ODA) including the debt swap for sustainable development, with a call to the international financial institutions to follow their role in supporting this work and to create effective partnerships and new initiatives to provide sources of funding for the programmes of developing countries in this area, particularly with regard to the support for scientific research aimed at developing national technologies, transfer and localization of appropriate technology, and capacity building in line with the national priorities of States.

(17) Urge the international community to establish a mechanism to facilitate the transfer and localization of clean, environmentally friendly technology to developing countries, including cleaner fossil fuel and energy efficiency techniques and equipment, and helping to raise the efficiency of the use of natural resources and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. We urge that this mechanism is concerned with all aspects related to the transfer of technology and in particular (a) identifying the needs of developing countries and appropriate technologies, (b) identifying the necessary funding sources, (c) the effective transfer of technology, and (d) the adaptation of technology and related capacity-building and maintaining property rights.

(18) Call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to request the participation of regional groups to express their opinion in the preparation of the report related to intergenerational solidarity in achieving sustainable development.

In addition to the above, we recommend to the responsible authorities in the Arab countries the following:

(1) Work to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region in accordance with the region’s circumstances and priorities through: updating the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and its operational plans in accordance with the priorities of the region, and work to implement Arab strategies and approved plans to meet the future challenges of sustainable development, including the Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region, the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 10-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to enhance the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the green belts project in the territories of the Arab world, regional biodiversity planning, the Muscat Action Plan for Wetlands in the Arab Countries, and the Arab Framework of Action on Climate Change.

(2) Undertake an assessment and prepare a report on the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Initiative for the Arab Region.

(3) Emphasize that sustainable development programmes in the Arab region target diversification of the economies of the Arab states and options to ensure poverty reduction and job creation, social justice, and environmental safety, including strengthening the capacity of sustainable productive sectors, especially in rural areas and small and medium enterprises, including encouraging youth groups in Arab societies.
(4) Diversify energy sources, including new and renewable energy to achieve sustainable development in the Arab region. To ensure this, developed countries and international organizations should provide support in the areas of scientific research, transfer and diffusion of technology, and capacity building in relevant areas.

(5) Give priority to programmes that target poor and marginalized groups and work to provide more basic services and infrastructure, including water supply and sanitation, health and education, taking into account the equitable distribution of resources and services, especially in light of unprecedented population growth in recent times, with due consideration given to the needs of the major groups of farmers, academics, women, children and young people, amongst others.

(6) Introduce the concepts of sustainable development in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities to raise the awareness of younger generations of the importance of achieving sustainable development, particularly the conservation and sustainability of natural resources.

(7) Support the existing trend in the Arab world for the development and establishment of information networks and data to support sustainable development decision-making processes and support and take advantage of Arab initiatives in this area that benefit decision-making, including the Abu Dhabi Environmental Data Initiative "Eye on Earth".

(8) Request that ESCWA prepare a periodic follow-up report on the implementation of the outcomes of Rio +20 in Arab countries for submission to the League of Arab States for adoption.

(9) Assign the League of Arab States to send this document to its Permanent Representatives of the Arab countries in New York and direct it to the Arab negotiators to guide them in meetings related to preparations for the Twentieth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and the consultative meetings to prepare the sustainable development goals.

(10) Present this document at the next meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment.

We, the participants in the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-20) - Follow-up from the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) in Dubai on 29-30 May 2013, representatives of Arab states and international and regional organizations, experts and representatives from major groups, would like to thank His Excellency the Minister of Environment and Water, Dr. Rashid Ahmad bin Fahad and appreciate his sponsorship of the meeting and his honoring of the opening session. We also extend our thanks to both the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment in the United Arab Emirates and the Dubai Police Academy, and the League of Arab States, and the United Nations Environment Programme / Regional Office of West Asia, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, for their sincere efforts in setting technical and logistical support for the implementation of the meeting and the generous hospitality to the participants.

Dubai, 30 May 2013