Session Brief
Session 2: Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015

Date/Time: Wednesday 29th May, 13:30 – 15:15
Venue: Main Conference Room, Dubai Policy Academy
Moderator: Dr Sameer Ghazi, President Deputy for Environment and Sustainable Development, Saudi Arabia
Panellists:
- Mr Ghassan Fares Al Sayah, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment, Lebanon
- Mr Kishan Khoday, UNDP Practice Leader for Energy & Environment in the Arab States, Arab Regional Centre (RBAS), UNDP

Expert Presenters:
1. “Key issues for consideration for SDGs and post-2015 agenda for the Arab region”
   Dr Michelle Obeid, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester.
2. “Priority issues for consideration: water-energy-food nexus”
   Dr Waleed Zubari, Arabian Gulf University

ESCWA Coordinator: Mr Cameron Allen (allen6@un.org)

OBJECTIVES:
The objective of this session is to discuss the SDGs and post-2015 agenda with a view to identifying:
- Key Arab regional messages to be communicated to relevant international processes and fora;
- Key Arab regional priorities for implementing the SDGs at the regional and national levels.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
As part of the outcome for the Arab RIM, it will be important for governments and stakeholders to consider what key messages need to be sent to the international community as input into key global processes as well as what are the key regional priorities for implementation of the SDGs.

What are the key messages to send to the international community?
1. What are the lessons learned from the MDGs and the best means for converging the MDGs and SDGs?
2. What are the key priorities for the SDGs and post-2015 from an Arab regional perspective?
3. How can the Arab region contribute to the global discussions and negotiations on MDGs and SDGs?
4. Is there a need to coordinate at the regional level during the process of establishing SDGs? What could such coordination look like taking into account the six countries of the region that are members of the OWG?
5. How can the region best stay engaged in these international processes? What role can regional organizations such as ESCWA, LAS and UNEP play in facilitating engagement?

What are the key priorities for implementation at the regional level?
6. How might the Arab region best implement, monitor and assess the progress on SDGs? In this context, can a common framework approach be used?
7. What institutions and mechanisms could facilitate this in the region? Should the SDGs be integrated into key regional mechanisms such as the SDIAR?
8. What kind of support do countries need in implementing and following up on the goals?
9. What roles can LAS, ESCWA, UNEP and other stakeholders such as the GCC play in supporting countries?
BACKGROUND FOR SESSION:

An important outcome from Rio+20 was the agreement to develop a new set of SDGs to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. The goals should address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, environment, social) and their inter-linkages. The outcome document did not identify the areas to be addressed by the SDGs, however it underscored that they should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries. They should also be based on the outcomes of previous global summits and coherent with, and integrated into, the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

The SDGs will be established through an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process open to all stakeholders, with a view to having them agreed by the General Assembly. An Open Working Group was constituted in January 2013 which includes representatives from the Arab region (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates). A report is due to be submitted to the General Assembly at its 68th session (2013/14), containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action.

In preparation for the Arab RIM, a background paper on SDGs has been prepared by an expert consultant which provides the narrative and context for discussions at the meeting. It includes an overview of the framing questions and conceptual issues that are being negotiated at the global level, which include:

- **How do we select a universal set of goals that recognise CBDR?** An approach proposed is that goals be universal whilst targets are selected nationally.
- **How to balance and integrate the three dimensions?** An approach proposed is to develop a few key goals that combine all three dimensions, with narrower goals to complement these. Alternatively, each goal could have targets/indicators that embrace all three dimensions.
- **How to address the means of implementation?** Questions remain on how ODA, trade, investment, technology transfer and capacity building be addressed.
- **How to measure progress?** Key questions remain around the selection of indicators.

The paper also highlights some potential priority areas for SDGs for the Arab region, which might address the following issues, amongst others: peace and security; climate change; food, water and energy security; sustainable consumption and production; poverty eradication; employment; and urbanisation.

FURTHER READING – BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Arab RIM working paper on key issues for consideration for the SDGs and post-2015 agenda for the Arab region (Dr Michelle Obeid);
- Reports from regional, national and thematic consultations undertaken in the region in the context of post-2015.
**Bionotes:**

**Dr Sameer Jameel Ghazi** is President Deputy for Environment and Sustainable Development, Saudi Arabia. Dr Ghazi has worked for the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment since 1985, and has gained experience from his supervision of different Divisions, Departments and General Directorates, including Oil Pollution Control Division, Marine Department, General Directorate of Natural Resources, General Directorate of Environmental Assessment and Pre-Qualification. He also worked as Assistant to the Director General of Environmental Protection General Directorate for Scientific and Technical Affairs, and the President Deputy Assistant for Sustainable Development. He is a member of many Professional Councils and Societies, including the Global Council for Energy, Saudi Environment Council, Governing Board for Saudi Wild Life Agency, amongst others. He has headed several Official Saudi Delegations and participated on many regional and international official meetings. Dr Ghazi holds a B.Sc on Chemical Oceanography from King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia and a PhD from the University of Wales, College of Sewansea, UK. Finally, he has written and published 47 articles, papers, reports, and studies, and conducted several interviews and press releases with different kinds of media.

**Mr Ghassan Fares Sayah** is the Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment in Lebanon, HE Mr. Nazem El-Khoury. He is Chairman of the Board of the YMCA – Lebanon (a leading development agency working in Lebanon since 1890) and Member of the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of YMCAs – Geneva. He was previously CEO of the YMCA Lebanon and has a 50-year career with the organization. He is Chairman and founder of the Board of the Lebanon Parliamentary Forum, the Chairman and founder of the Board of the Lebanon NGO Forum and a Member of the Social & Economic Council in Lebanon, representing the Civil Society. He has worked in socio-economic development for 35 years, previously worked as an advisor to two Lebanese parliamentary committees (Public Health; Youth & Sports) and is a management consultant specialized in management training. He holds Bachelor degrees in psychology and business administration.

**Mr Kishan Khoday** is UNDP Practice Leader for Energy & Environment in the Arab States, based in the UNDP Arab Regional Center in Cairo. He leads coordination and support to UNDPs large and growing portfolio of local capacity development programmes in countries across the region on issues such as sustainable energy, climate change, natural resource management and ecosystem services. Kishan served prior as UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Saudi Arabia (2009-13), UNDP Team Leader for Energy & Environment in China (2005-2009), and UNDP Deputy Coordinator for Energy & Environment in Indonesia (1997-2005). He has published extensively on various aspects of sustainable development and holds degrees in law, natural resource management, and environmental science.

**Dr Michelle Obeid** obtained her PhD in Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics in 2006. She joined the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW) at the University of Manchester in 2007 and has been Lecturer in the Social Anthropology Department since 2011. Her academic work focuses on themes related to social change at the Northeastern border of Lebanon, gender and kinship, the anthropology of the state and borders, sustainable development, mobility and emplacement. She has recently worked with UNDESA and UNESCWA on the development of National Sustainable Development Strategies in conflict-affected countries in Lebanon.
Professor Waleed Zubari currently holds the academic position of Professor of Water Resources Management at the Arabian Gulf University (AGU), and the administrative positions of the Coordinator of the Water Resources Management Program and the UN Water Learning Center for the Arab Region. He obtained his MSc in 1987 and PhD from Ohio University (1987) and PhD degree from Colorado State University (1990) in the field of Groundwater Mathematical Modeling, and joined the AGU in 1990. Since joining AGU, he has taught many courses in Hydrogeology and Water Resources Management and Planning in Arid Regions, and has published more than 90 research papers in peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and seminars. He served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Arab Gulf Journal of Scientific Research (AGJSR), a multi-disciplinary regional Journal for the GCC countries, during the period September, 2006 – January, 2010. He serves as a consultant for many international and regional organizations, including UNESCO, UNEP, UNDP, ESCWA, and FAO.