**Session Brief**

**Session 4: Institutional framework for sustainable development – global, regional and national inter-linkages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time:</th>
<th>Thursday 30th May, 9:15 – 11:00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venue:</td>
<td>Main Conference Room, Dubai Policy Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Ms Zahwa Kuwari, Director, Environmental Assessment and Planning Directorate; Environmental Policy and Planning Directorate, Bahrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panellists:</td>
<td>Dr Mona Makram Ebeid, Senator; Distinguished Lecturer, Political Science AUC; President, Committee for Social Rights, NCHR, Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Mehdi Jaaffar, Oman Environment Society, Oman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Presenters:</td>
<td>1. “Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development, status of global processes, emerging institutional framework for sustainable development and links with post-2015” Ms Irena Zubcevic and Mr David Le Blanc, Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “Changes to institutional arrangements for environmental governance” Ms Melanie Hutchison, UNEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. “Enhancing Arab regional institutions for sustainable development: enhancing integration and accelerating implementation” Mr Riccardo Mesiano, ESCWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCWA Coordinator:</td>
<td>Mr Cameron Allen (<a href="mailto:allen6@un.org">allen6@un.org</a>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of the session are to:

- Provide an overview of the emerging global institutional framework for sustainable development and the global-regional -national inter-linkages;
- Explore opportunities for enhancing Arab regional and national institutions for sustainable development so that they better engage with international processes, and better facilitate implementation of sustainable development and integrated decision making at the regional and national levels.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

What are the key messages to send to the international community?

1. Have regional preparatory meetings for CSD been effective in the past? How might they be improved under the new HLPF? How can ESCWA, LAS and UNEP best facilitate this in light of the Rio+20 outcomes and the new institutional architecture?

What are the key priorities for implementation at the regional level?

2. Are existing institutional arrangements at the regional and national levels adequate for implementing sustainable development? If not, what can be done to strengthen them with a view to enhancing integration and accelerating implementation?

3. How can existing institutions such as LAS, CAMRE, ESCWA and UNEP enhance integration and accelerate implementation of sustainable development? What are the lessons from other regions that could provide guidance?

4. How can existing regional mechanisms such as the SDIAR be updated or revitalised to address Rio+20 outcomes, regional priorities and previous implementation gaps?

5. At the national level, how can governments enhance institutional arrangements for sustainable development? Are there good examples from the region or elsewhere that provide guidance?
BACKGROUND FOR SESSION:

In the Rio+20 outcome document, governments agreed to a HLPF for sustainable development which shall be responsible for follow-up on the implementation of sustainable development and subsequently replace the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). Its format and organizational aspects are being determined through an intergovernmental negotiation process under the General Assembly which will aim to finish in May, with the aim of convening the first HLPF at the beginning of the 68th session of the General Assembly in September 2013. In addition, governments agreed to strengthen UNEP and the first Universal Governing Council was held earlier this year.

The outcome document also underscored the importance of a strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development at the national and regional levels which integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner, responds to current and future challenges and bridges gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. As part of the Rio+20 follow-up, now is an ideal time to take stock of this framework and explore options for enhancing integration and accelerating progress on sustainable development in the Arab region. An important consideration will be enhancing inter-linkages between the global-regional-national levels.

The current proposal being negotiated by governments at the international level on the HLPF includes the provision for regional preparatory meetings to include a regional dimension in its deliberations, similar to the regional meetings for CSD. These regional coordination mechanisms provide an important platform for regional consultation and coordination and should be strengthened in the context of the HLPF, building on the successes and failures of CSD. Experience with previous preparatory meetings suggests that the outcomes from these meetings have not had a significant impact on deliberations at the global level. In this regard, options for enhancing the impact of the outcomes from regional meetings at the global level should be explored so that a strong and cohesive message is delivered from the Arab region.

Regional initiatives for sustainable development in the Arab region have been monitored and coordinated under the auspices of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), its Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), and its Technical Secretariat comprised of the LAS, ESCWA and UNEP. A range of other regional institutions also exist that support implementation across the region. At the national level, most countries in the Arab region have also established ministries for the environment which often take the lead on sustainable development issues. However, there are ongoing challenges at both the regional and national levels with regard to integrated decision-making that embraces all dimensions of sustainable development. A key problem has been that environment ministries and institutions simply do not have the mandate for decision-making across the social and economic dimensions and have therefore had limited influence.

A background paper on institutions for sustainable development has been prepared for the Arab RIM, which provides an introduction to changes at the global level, an overview of Arab regional and national institutions and key gaps and challenges, and a comparison with practice in other regions. Importantly, the paper concluded that Rio+20 provides an important suite of new tools that can provide a comprehensive framework for sustainable development: the development of the SDGs can provide the overall strategic direction and framework for measuring progress, the green economy provides the policy tools necessary to transform our economies, while revitalised institutions can provide the structure and mechanisms for implementation. It also provides a series of recommendations for enhancing regional (and national) institutions and mechanisms for sustainable development in the Arab region, including:
• ESCWA, LAS and UNEP should continue to organise regional preparatory meetings in the context of the new HLPF, building on past experiences and failures of CSD and regional implementation meetings.

• The region could consider elevating overall responsibility for sustainable development agenda setting, policymaking and monitoring of progress to the highest political level within LAS and establish a mechanism for enhanced coordination between its various councils with a view to enhancing integration. Various options are available to achieve this, which are outlined in the recommendations of the paper.

• ESCWA, UNEP and other regional organisations should continue to work closely with LAS to support the implementation of sustainable development in the region, including through regional strategies, initiatives and meetings. Enhanced participation of major groups and the scientific community should also be facilitated, for example through a regional advisory committee.

• The SDIAR should be updated or replaced with a new regional strategy or framework that addresses key ongoing and emerging challenges for the region as well as priorities stemming from Rio+20. This should ultimately be based on the global SDGs once agreed and focus on a limited set of policy priorities that are specific projects and activities on the ground with clear responsibilities, timeframes, indicators and funding.

• As a component of the SDIAR, the region should pursue a regional strategy or roadmap for the green economy. This should use a sound methodology to assess green economy policy options and analyse trade-offs, and include regional mechanisms for enhanced cooperation on green technology and financing.

• Allocation of sufficient financial and technical resources to support regional mechanisms is critical.

• A consistent set of indicators and monitoring framework should be developed for the region to monitor progress towards sustainable development and green economy.

**Further Reading – Background Papers:**

• Arab RIM background paper on regional and national institutions for sustainable development in the Arab region (Mr George Akl);

• Arab RIM background paper on implications of Rio+20 for the Arab region (Dr Anhar Hegazi).

**Bionotes:**

**Ms Zahwa Mohammed Salem Al Kuwari** is the Director of the Environmental Assessment and Planning Directorate and the Environmental Policy and Planning Directorate. Ms Kuwari has more than 20 years’ experience in charge of different tasks and responsibilities including preparing reports on environmental policy issues and actions, as well as studies about environment, sustainable development, assessment, and energy. Ms Kuwari has proven organizational and leadership skills and ability to use initiative and creativity in analyzing and solving problems. Ms Kuwari also has professional experience in coordinating UN conventions and projects implemented under local and international agencies mainly: UNDP, UNEP, GEF, World Bank.

**Dr Mona Makram-Ebeid** is a Senator and Member of the Shoura Assembly in Egypt and Distinguished Lecturer of Political Science at the American University in Cairo. She is also the Head of the Committee of Social Rights in the National Council on Human Rights. Dr Makram-Ebeid graduated from Harvard, J.F. Kennedy School of Government in 1982 and the American University in Cairo and was a Fulbright scholar and Edward Mason Fellow at Harvard University. Dr Makram-Ebeid has held many distinguished positions including Member of the People’s Assembly, Advisor to the Minister of Immigration, Member of the Advisory Council to the Supreme Council Armed Forces, Member of the Constituent Assembly, Member of the Executive Board.
of the Club of Roam, Advisor to the World Bank for the Middle East and North African Region, amongst many others. Dr Makram-Ebeid has taught at the American University in Paris, the Peace University in Costa Rica and is currently teaching an MA course in International Relations in Sorbonne Abu Dhabi. She is a prolific writer for a variety of national and international newspapers, speaks fluent English, French and Arabic and has traveled extensively to the US, Europe, Africa and Asia. She has received several awards, among them: Officier de la Legion d’Honneur and Distinguished Alumni Award (AUC).

Dr Mehdi Jaafar is the Vice President of the Environment Society of Oman. Dr Jaafar originally trained as a TESOL instructor but subsequently pursued post graduate education and training and then served in the field of environmental education and awareness before moving to Nature Conservation in 1996 in his capacity as the Director General for Nature Conservation. In the summer of 1998 he moved to Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) assuming different roles and responsibilities before concluding his tenure at SQU as the Advisor to the Centre for Environment Studies & Research (CES&R) until the end of 2009. At the turn of the new millennium, he - amongst many others - lobbied for the initiation of Oman’s first civic environment entity, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) which has emerged over the years as a formidable and credible civic entity spearheading non-governmental efforts and promoting the concept of sustainable development. He has been elected as Oman’s NGO representative to many successive consultation meetings, including Rio+20 regional workshops. Dr Mehdi has served on a number of nationally formed committees operating in different facets of environment, for example The National Committee for the Development of Environment Sustainable Development Indicators, The Drafting Committee for Oman’s Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan, and The National committee on Climate Change and Kyoto Protocol.

Ms Irena Zubcevic is a Senior Sustainable Development officer at the Division for Sustainable Development in the United Nations Secretariat in New York working on intergovernmental support and the institutional framework for sustainable development and is also a member of a task team on the post-2015 development agenda and financing for sustainable development. Prior to joining the United Nations, Irena was a diplomat and served in Australia and the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations. She was a member of the Bureau of CSD-11 and the Second Committee of the General Assembly. Irena holds a master of science degree in social studies and humanities from the University of Zagreb and Senior Managers in Government from Harvard University.


Ms Melanie Hutchinson is Programme Officer at the United Nations Environment Program Regional Office for Western Asia. She has 18 years of experience with the private sector, academia and international organizations on environmental management, environmental impact assessment and sustainable development. Before joining UNEP, Melanie served for 2 years in Malaysia working in the private sector undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments for major water resource projects and prior to that with the private sector and academia in the UK working with
small and medium-sized enterprises in support of cleaner production and Environmental Management Systems. Having served in both public and private sector and in a number of regions, Melanie has an appreciation of strength in diversity and North-South and South-South cooperation, and making full use of multi-stakeholder approaches. In her current position, Melanie works with UN Country Teams and sister UN agencies in Delivering as One in the Arab region, and has coordinated with ESCWA the Rio+20 follow up and SDGs work at regional and national levels. Melanie holds a Master of Science in Environmental Analysis and Dynamics from the University of Hull, UK and a Bachelors of Science in Geography from the University of Liverpool, UK.

Mr Riccardo Mesiano is a First Economic Affairs Officer with 10 years of experience in Economic Development obtained with the UN system (UN-ESCWA, UNIDO, UNDP), the European Commission, and the Italian Trade Commission. He holds a PhD from Paris-Evry University, and a Master Degree in International Trade. Mr Mesiano has published a number of articles and publications on Clusters, SMEs and Green Economy and managed some important development projects on Trade Development in Asia focusing on SPS and TBT. He currently works on Sustainable Development issues with a special focus on Green Economy and Food Security. Mr. Mesiano has worked in South America, India, Morocco, Albania and Lebanon.