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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia****REPORT<sup>\*</sup>****REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAND DEGRADATION ISSUES  
IN THE ARAB REGION  
CAIRO, 30 OCTOBER – 1 NOVEMBER 2007****Summary**

The Regional Conference on Land degradation Issues in the Arab Region was held in Cairo from 30 October to 1 November 2007. The Conference was organized by ESCWA in cooperation with LAS, UNEP/ROWA and ACSAD. The main objectives of the Conference were to identify modalities for and to instigate regional cooperation in the prevention and reversal of land degradation and to review and assess the technical inputs and contributions of the Arab Region to the preparations of CSD-16. The Conference was attended by the organizing partners, representatives of ACSAD, AOAD and ICARDA, representatives of 17 Arab countries, five UNCCD focal points and 22 experts from Arab, regional and international organizations participating in the Conference.

Opening statements by ACSAD, UNEP/ROWA, ESCWA and LAS outlined the objectives and significance of the Conference. The main background papers reviewed the status of natural resources, factors of degradation, achievements, challenges, constraints, and actions to be taken for the sustainable development of lands, agriculture and rural areas.

The national reports, presented by 17 Arab countries, illustrated the basic and common features of the available natural resources including disparity of quantity and distribution of resources among countries of the Region. Variations included areas of the main land use categories, quantities and nature of water resources. The greater majority of these resources are characterized by scarcity, liability to varied factors of desertification based on natural and human induced factors. Natural factors included aridity of climate, variability and distribution of rainfall, increasing drought events, local floods combined with physiographic attributes leading to water erosion processes. The main human induced factors included deterioration of plant cover due to deforestation, overgrazing, mismanagement and over-exploitation of land resources enhancing wind erosion, urban encroachment on productive lands, soil and water pollution, over-extraction of groundwater and misuse of irrigation water.

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The adverse impacts of the factors referred to above were different from one country to another. These factors were exasperated by pressure of high rates of population increase, institutional constraints, implementation of inefficient policies and programmes, lack of capacity building, use of inappropriate technologies, limitations of research efforts, absence of participatory approach as well as disparity of capacities among the LDC's of the Region particularly pertinent to poverty, education, health and socio-economic capabilities. The slow rates of development of agricultural and rural areas led to enhanced problems of migration from rural to urban areas accompanied by varied socio-economic constraints. The role and collaboration among Arab countries and organizations active in the region varied considerably. Joint funding and its sustainability is an issue that merits greater enhancement.

Conference discussions raised significant issues related to credibility, harmonization and effective exchange of data, needs for synergies among activities implemented to fulfill commitments to UNCCD and other conventions, the continued processes of desertification throughout the Region, impacts of local conflicts and wars, the need to enhance sub-regional and regional collaborative activities, efficient exchange of information and expertise, adaptation and mitigation of increased drought events and climate change impacts, need to enhance research activities, develop and advance cooperation with Arab, regional and international organizations.

The Conference adapted feasible and meaningful recommendations relevant to Arab region contribution to the preparation of CSD-16, rural development, combating land degradation, measures required to secure sustainable developments of land resources, enhancing regional and international cooperation as well as establishing an Arab Center for Early Warning of Drought.

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## **Introduction**

1. The Regional Conference on Land Degradation Issues in the Arab Region (Cairo, 30 October – 1 November 2007) was organized by ESCWA in cooperation with LAS Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs, UNEP/ROWA and ACSAD. The first main objective of the Regional Conference was to identify modalities for and to instigate regional cooperation in the prevention and reversal of land degradation. The second main objective of the Regional Conference was to review and assess the technical inputs prepared by the concerned regional cooperating partners for the ninth session of JCEDAR as the Arab Region RIM and as inputs to the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of CSD.
2. The Regional Conference was held back to back with the Ninth Session of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), which took place from 4 to 6 November 2007 at the LAS Premises in Cairo. The JCEDAR session is the forum of the Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM) for the Arab Region, in preparation for the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16). ESCWA is expected to represent and lead the regional discussion for all 22 Arab States in the CSD sessions, and in this capacity coordinates the preparation of the technical documentation and reports for the whole Arab Region to be submitted to the CSD sessions and the Secretary General report.
3. In preparation for the CSD sessions, the Major Regional Cooperating Partners (ESCWA, LAS Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment, ACSAD, AOAD, UNEP/ROWA, ICARDA and The Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe CEDARE) have agreed that ACSAD, AOAD, and ICARDA would prepare and present five thematic technical papers. Each paper will discuss one of five thematic clusters of CSD-16 namely, Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Drought as well as Desertification. For consideration of the Ninth Session of JCEDAR, the five thematic technical papers were synthesized into a major combined report, which constitute the Arab region's inputs to CSD-16.
4. The Regional Conference on Land Degradation Issues in the Arab Region was convened with participation of the representatives of the organizing partners, three representatives of ACSAD, AOAD and ICARDA, 27 national experts representing 17 Arab countries, five Arab focal points of UNCCD and 22 experts affiliated to Arab, regional and international organizations.
5. The present report of the Conference comprises the summaries of the following items:
  - Recommendations
  - Opening Statements and Presentations of the main background papers
  - Presentations of the 17 Arab countries, and
  - Conference deliberations and discussions.

## **I. RECOMMENDATIONS**

6. In view of the issues raised through the presentations in this conference, in addition to the review of discussions of the papers presented, the participants recommended the following:

### **A. ARAB REGION CONTRIBUTION TO THE PREPARATION OF “CSD-16”**

7. The participants value the efforts made by the organizing partners and the relevant regional organizations for the preparation of the background regional papers on the five thematic clusters of CSD-16.
8. They call upon ESCWA to coordinate with the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment to include the outcomes of discussions around the Reports referred to in the Draft of the Regional Arab Report which will be presented to the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region “JCEDAR”. Also to include in the Draft Report the emphasis on the needs of the Arab Region to international support in the various fields.

9. They request ESCWA and the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment to send the Regional Arab Report in its final form to the participants of the present Conference in order to be able to inform the representatives of their countries to CSD-16 Meeting of the contents of the Report especially with regards to progress made to address the issues of land degradation, relief of drought impacts and agricultural and rural development.

#### B. IN THE FIELD OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

10. As the participants appreciate the efforts made to enhance rural development, taking into consideration the disparity in related resources and capacities among Arab countries, the Conference emphasizes the work needed at the national and regional levels to increase the efforts to develop and improve the rural areas in all Arab countries in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals especially relevant to alleviation of poverty and hunger, generalize basic education, health and maternal care and empowerment of women to effectively participate in the various activities.

11. To use mechanisms provided by UNCCD to support investments in the field of rural development.

12. Call upon the Arab countries to include the needs of rural development in programmes, in the national strategies and developmental plans taking into consideration equity of distribution of resources among rural and urban areas and to provide the support to small projects in the rural areas to contribute to combating poverty.

#### C. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARAB CENTER FOR EARLY WARNING OF DROUGHT

13. The participants emphasize the importance of establishing an Arab Center for Early Warning on Drought to be entrusted with providing and securing the continuous flow of relevant climatic and scientific information and identify measures that could be taken by the Arab countries to confront drought.

14. In that respect the participants call upon the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to present the idea of establishing the Arab Center for Monitoring and Early Warning on Drought through the mechanisms adopted by the Arab League, taking into consideration the relevant present efforts in the Arab Region.

#### D. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE BACKGROUND PAPER ON DESERTIFICATION IN THE ARAB REGION

15. Call upon the Arab countries to formulate strategies, policies and give priority to combat desertification, drought and land degradation as part of the policies and plans for sustainable development. The participants also call for the implementation of national plans to combat desertification with adequate consideration to enhance the assignment of national funds and encouragement of financial support by the private sector and funding institutions as well as to support collaboration with the regional and Arab organizations in that respect.

16. Development and support of capacities of scientific research in the specified five fields with emphasis on monitoring of desertification and its control including development of local skills in the least Developed Arab Countries (LDC). In addition to the implementation of joint programmes shared by the national institutions, and the regional and Arab organizations to get improved technologies that are easy to be transferred and applied as well as the use of mechanisms provided by UNCCD in that respect.

17. To boost sub-regional and regional cooperation in the fields of environmental protection and resources conservation. To adopt the approach of sharing and participatory contribution especially by women and youth to combat desertification and land degradation inclusive of its physical, biological and social aspects.

## E. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE BACKGROUND PAPER ON LAND RESOURCES

18. Give ample consideration to survey land resources, prepare its maps and compile all information related to lands in order to establish correct databases which do not contradict with other information sources for the support of proper planning to better manage and exploit land resources.

19. To develop and conserve land resources through improved extension services, appropriate technologies transfer, strict implementation of legislations, establishment of integrated database and to request the Arab League to coordinate efforts among the Arab countries through available mechanisms to formulate an integrated Arab strategy to curtail degradation of land resources especially in arid and semi-arid regions.

## F. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

20. Call upon the member countries to give special consideration to coordinate activities among the relevant national institutions concerned with the five thematic main issues addressed in the Conference as well as to assign national focal points to be responsible for issuing credible national information and its circulation among the Arab countries in cooperation with the Arab and regional organizations active in this field.

21. Call upon the countries, Arab and regional organizations to coordinate their efforts to implement the national and regional commitments relevant to the international conventions dealing with the main issues addressed in the present Conference, having in mind the rationalization of efforts, the enhancement of the efficiency of funds used, the saving of time, optimum use of human resources and efficient use of the mechanisms and facilities available in the Arab League.

22. Request the Arab and regional organizations to offer technical support to the Arab countries in the following:

- a. Preparation of detailed documents for the project included in the “Abou Dhabi Declaration on Environment and Development” to be presented to the Arab and international funding Agencies, especially those relevant to rehabilitation of the degraded lands to be presented to the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- b. Implementation of programmes prepared and to support some of the countries to prepare their NAP's.

23. Request the Arab and regional organizations to support regional cooperation in the five thematic main issues of the Conference through the following:

- a. Mechanisms and working teams formed within the framework of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment, in collaboration with the specialized institutions, and ministers of environment in meetings, activities, mechanisms and the working teams referred to.
- b. Establishment of a permanent working team “Permanent Secretariat” within the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, to follow up on the Arab efforts in relevant areas and to follow up on regional and sub-regional programmes that are being carried out in the areas referred to (UNCCD – SRAP – ADI – AISD)
- c. To define unified Arab trends about desertification, land degradation and water resources and to support efforts leading to benefit from the regional and international funding mechanisms to support efforts in the Arab region at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.
- d. Establish an information bank and database for every natural resource in each country with the assignment based on unified standards.

24. Call upon the countries and organizations to give ample consideration to capacity building and public awareness of the importance of conservation and development of natural resources and including the issues of natural resources in school educational curricula and information programmes at the various levels.
25. Request the Arab, regional and international organizations to provide more support to the state of Palestine, through the programmes and activities of these organizations.
26. Request the Arab, regional and international organizations to provide more support to countries suffering from instability, through the programmes and activities of these organizations.

## II. MAIN TOPICS AND DISCUSSIONS

### A. OPENING STATEMENTS

27. **ACSAD** opening statement referred to Desertification, Land degradation, drought and reduction of productivity as the main factors limiting economic growth, food security and reduction of poverty rates. Such conditions require the collaboration of Arab efforts and joint programmes to approach and achieve sustainable development. ACSAD was established to deal with desertification, drought problems and to formulate appropriate management systems to develop and conserve the available natural resources. Such activities aim to alleviate the adverse impacts on human life, environment, national economies and social conditions.
28. Activities carried out by ACSAD were reviewed including formulating maps depicting the state of desertification assessment and monitoring, use of remote sensing and GIS, establishing regional Early Warning System, collaboration with national, regional and international organizations. In conclusion, thanks were extended to the organizers and the participating regional organizations and national representatives.
29. **UNEP/ROWA** opened its statement by commending the efforts made to organize and finance the convening of the Conference. Reference was made to the significance of natural and human factors contributing to desertification and its direct adverse impacts to over 250 million people and its threats to over one billion persons. The adverse impact of the high rate of population increase in the Arab Region was stressed, in addition to the impacts of human induced factors leading to land and plant cover degradation, which contribute to the disturbance of the environment ecosystems that are well adapted to the prevailing harsh conditions. The presentation referred to the significant efforts exerted by the Arab countries in collaboration with regional and international organizations to combat desertification processes, which unfortunately are still active in the Region.
30. It was stressed that more efforts should be made especially by the private sector and civil societies to elaborate integrated and continued activities to secure the fundamental basis of sustainable development of the ecological systems. The presentation was concluded by stressing the interest of UNEP/ROWA to collaborate its efforts at the national regional and international levels in strategic partnership with LAS and all concerned organizations.
31. **ESCWA** opening statement pointed out that the present Conference was included in its programmes for the years 2006/2007 in recognition of the significance of enhancing the regional cooperation to combat desertification and to secure active Arab contributions to CSD-16. The presentation commended the fruitful cooperation among the organizers of the Conference and appreciated the contributions of the participating Arab and regional organizations. The presentation went on to stress the integral relationship between combating land degradation and sustainable development. The Arab region suffers from scarcity of natural resources, which are prone to desertification processes due to varied factors. The presentation stressed that it is not appropriate to address the issues of land degradation in isolation of its linkages to problems of drought, agricultural and rural development. For this reason it was agreed to discuss the main five issues of the Conference with background papers prepared by Arab and regional organizations, with the outcomes of discussions to be presented to CSD-16 to be convened in May 2008.

32. A combined Arab Report prepared to include the outcomes and discussions of your present Conference which will be reviewed during the Ninth Session of JCEDAR (4-6 Nov. 2007) and in turn will be submitted to CSD-16. The present Conference presents a valuable opportunity for the national Arab experts to coordinate and activate measures and integrations of needed efforts, activities and policies to achieve sustainable development pertinent to the issues of the Conference. Major efforts of the Arab countries to combat desertification were briefly reviewed. ESCWA expressed its thanks and appreciation to all efforts and activities that were needed to convene such an important conference. Thanks were extended to the participating national representatives for their efforts and wished them successful and meaningful achievements.

33. The statement of the **League of Arab States** expressed the greetings of the Secretary General of LAS. Thanks and appreciation were extended to ESCWA, UNEP/ROWA and ACSAD as partners responsible for the convening of the Conference. The presentation further stressed on the significance of the main issues to be discussed by the participants in view of the work plan issued by the World Summit for Sustainable Development. The presentation commended Arab contributions to the meetings of the Commission for Sustainable Development, where JCEDAR is considered as a scientific and technical Consultant to UN-CSD.

34. The presentation reviewed the preparations and efforts of organizing partners, collaborating Arab and regional organizations, major objectives of the Conference and the expected fruitful outcomes. The contributions of the Arab experts representing their respective countries were highly appreciated. Their efforts and discussions of the main issues during the deliberations of the Conference are valued and are anticipated to enrich the outcomes of the Conference. Appropriate and implementable recommendations to combat drought and desertification in the Region are welcomed from such a distinguished gathering.

35. After the opening statements **UN-ESCWA** presented two working papers and one presentation dealing with the topic of "Promoting Regional Cooperation in Reversing Land Degradation in the ESCWA Region" the first working paper reviewed land degradation at the country level, status of regional cooperation and the means to enhance regional cooperation. The second working paper presented a "Project Proposal" to be implemented and funded at regional level with the main objectives of collecting and analyzing the existing data on land degradation through a uniform approach, design effective indicators for identifying bright and hot spots, compile thematic information as part of updating regional databases to serve the decision-making processes, build up capacity to strengthen regional institutional collaboration and common policies to create a Regional Land Degradation Network (RLDN).

36. The ESCWA presentation, pertinent to the same general topic, dealt with introduction of the main definitions and concepts, reviewing challenges and opportunities for agriculture development in West Asia and recommending appropriate measures for promoting regional cooperation in reversing land degradation and ESCWA region.

## B. LANDS

37. Most of the area of the Arab World (90%) lies in the hyper-arid and arid regions. The soil resources in the region are newly formed, poorly developed of low fertility status and liable to various degradation factors. Water resources are scarce and represent one of the major constraints to sustainable development.

38. The Arab region receives different amounts of yearly rainfall with varied distribution within the season and intra season. About 62% of the total area receives rainfall less than 100 mm/year while 28% receives between 100-300 mm/year and only 10% receives more than 300mm/year. The main surface water resources include the great rivers such as the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris. The other continuously flowing rivers get their waters from rainfall and from melting of snow accumulating on the peaks of the mountains in addition to many wadies, seasonal water flow are scattered throughout the Arab world. The number of the groundwater basins in the Arab world amounts to about 27, which differ greatly in its water storage capacities



39. Land uses in the region are varied including cultivated lands; rainfed, irrigated and permanent trees. The area of rainfed agriculture amounts to about 68% of the total cultivated area. This type of agriculture is of low productivity and instability of production and profits. The area of the irrigated lands amounts to about 20% of the total cultivated area. Other land uses include rangelands located under arid or semiarid climates and occupying about 27% of the total area. The vegetative cover of these rangelands is weak with low productivity. Forestlands represent at present about 4% of the total area with varied distribution among the Arab countries.

40. Significant efforts were carried out to enhance the development of land resources. These efforts included establishing natural resources digital databases, introducing the concept of integrated management, implementing sub-regional action programmes in cooperation with UNCCD, developing the use of nontraditional water resources, adopting the farming system approach, enhancing technology transfer and advancing decision making techniques.

41. The main challenges and constraints facing the sustainable development of land resources include; pressures exerted by population growth, land degradation factors, urban encroachment, pollution, overexploitation and mismanagement techniques. Other constraints include poverty, instability and conflicts, scarcity of water resources, adverse climatic conditions and climate change, impacts.

### C. DESERTIFICATION

42. In the Arab Region, most of the land resources suffer from desertification at different levels due to varied causes, which lead to serious adverse impacts on environmental, economic and social aspects. Despite the great efforts carried out by national institutions and regional organizations active in the Region, yet, desertification and land degradation processes are still active in the Region causing serious threats to human livelihoods and conservation of available valuable natural resources.

43. Factors of desertification active in the Arab Region could be summarized in the following; processes of wind and water evasions, loss of soil nutrients, increase of salt contents of productive lands, inefficient use of irrigation water, over-extraction of groundwater resources, continued rates of urban encroachment, pollution of land and water resources, over-grazing, forest cutting, deterioration of plant cover, in addition to mismanagement of land and water resources, as well as, some of the prevailing climatic conditions.

44. Adverse impacts of desertification are exhibited by degradation and reduction of productivity of the greater majority of rangelands, representing the largest land use category in the Region. Other impacts of desertification are pronounced through degradation of forest areas leading to loss of natural plant cover and valuable sources of bio-diversity of irrigated lands representing the most productive land use category with its diversified agricultural products with high economic returns in the Arab countries. Among the major impacts of desertification are its interrelations with poverty in addition to enhancement of social and economic levels of a major portion of the present population and indeed with the sustainable development of the whole Region.

45. Considerable efforts were carried out through the last two decades, by the national authorities, institutions, and NGO's and regional organizations to combat desertification. Progress at the national levels included endorsement of major related environmental conventions, formulation of work plans and steps taken for their implementation, formulation and endorsement of laws and legislations. Several initiatives were adopted to support the efforts to apply and benefit from the use of innovative technologies for the assessment and monitoring of desertification. Emphases were made on enhanced awareness and adoption of participatory approach in all relevant activities. On the sub-regional and regional levels, other significant efforts were carried out in cooperation with regional and donor agencies relevant to formation of database, conservation of water resources and plant cover in the Region.

## D. DROUGHT

46. The major agro-ecosystems in the region are rainfed, irrigated, and rangelands and forest areas. The increase of the frequency and intensity of drought during the last two decades has involved the reduction of crop productivity and animal production. Such impacts lead to enhanced imports of agricultural products especially cereals in many Arab countries. Drought phenomenon has also affected the price of agricultural products. Other consequences of drought are the degradation of land and water resources and loss of biodiversity.

47. Recently, many Arab countries have become more concerned with the problem of drought with actions taken to address such problem. Among actions taken is the establishment of national committees or units where different ministries are represented. Local committees have been also constituted to implement drought relief measures set up by the national committee. Governments recognize also the urgent need to develop long-term drought risk management strategies. Adoption of strategies has been encouraged by the international and regional organizations through consultations with decision makers.

48. Among the short term measures used in the region are the provision of supplementary feeds to safeguard livestock with the predominant investments going to subsidies of concentrates, wells digging and irrigation equipment purchase. Debt forgiveness, rescheduling of credits and creation of work opportunities in the rural areas have been also part of the Governments' programs under severe drought conditions.

49. To overcome the problems of drought and reduce its effects, there are needs to enhance the coordination of drought management at the local, national and regional levels and support and encourage research on drought and natural resources management in the Arab countries, and to support drought early warning system and to formulate risk management strategies using participatory approach and to encourage the micro-credit and drought insurance approach as a risk management tool.

## E. AGRICULTURE

50. Water scarcity is regarded as the main factor limiting agricultural development in the Arab region as a whole. The per capita share of water is estimated at 1057<sup>5</sup> meters per annum. Only in few Arab countries that the per capita share of water is above the poverty line. Land is the second limiting factor facing sustainable agricultural development in the Arab region and substantial expansion of arable land in the Arab region as a whole is limited by land suitability problems. At present only 35% of land in the Arab region is regarded as suitable for agricultural production purposes. A third factor which limits sustainable agricultural development efforts in the Arab region relates to the potential for expanding animal production. It was estimated that animal wealth in the Arab region has increased in the period 1990-2004 (a yearly increase of about 2.9%). The potential for integration of animal production in the region with fodder production has not been achieved. The clear example in this respect is the existing potential for use of pasture and irrigated lands in Sudan, Somalia and Morocco to produce fodder crops for export to the Gulf countries. The expansion of fisheries production in the Arab region is also limited, mainly because of the lack of investment in the development of the huge fishery resources that have remained largely unused. Another factor which limits the potential for sustainable agricultural development in the Arab region relates to population growth. In 2005, the population of the Arab region was 309 million.

51. Most of the countries of the Arab region have started to implement economic reform, restructuring programmes, and formulating agricultural policies which have direct impact on agricultural performance and the rate of progress toward achievement of the MDGs. The positive developments that have been achieved in agricultural technology have enabled some of the countries of the Arab region to maintain self-sufficiency in some principal food commodities, despite the deficiencies in the needed resources. However, the increases achieved in commodity production by use of improved technology in the Arab region are rather modest because of the effects of several limiting factors.

52. Local and regional studies suggested the presence of an association between environmental degradation, poverty and unemployment in rural communities. The principal factor that lead to environmental and socio-economic problems linked to poverty, besides desertification, environmental

hazards are caused by unwise use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers and other harmful and unsustainable production practices which lead to excessive exploitation of the already scarce water resource and constitute a threat to biodiversity.

53. During the past two decades, Arab countries have been encouraging the private sector to invest in agricultural industry to achieve added values. The main barriers facing agricultural development in the Arab region are classified into four categories, namely institutional, physical, technological, and economic. The importance of agricultural capacity building and training are recognized by most Arab organizations and institutions that have launched the implementation of a large number of specialized agricultural training programs at the national level.

54. The Arab ministers of agriculture and the Arab organization for agricultural development have agreed to develop and implement a strategy for agricultural development in the Arab region. The strategy will take into consideration the prevailing state of the Arab economy, trends of agricultural performance in the different countries, the perceived future challenges and barriers to sustainable agriculture development in the region, the need for improving agricultural technology and the strengthening of coordination and integration of agricultural development activities among the countries of the region with the ultimate objective of creating a Common Arab Market.

#### F. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

55. Reporting on the situation of rural development in the region is depended on available studies reflecting on rural development related activities in 13 Arab countries.

56. There are marked inter and intra regional variations within the countries of the Arab region with respect to availability of the resources needed for achieving sustainable development. This explains the existing variation in the progress made towards the application of Johannesburg's plan of implementation for fulfillment of the millennium development goals within the expected time frames. Notable progress has been made in the relatively more developed countries of the region in terms of rural socio-economic development and environmental and natural resource conservation. However, progress been weakened in some of the less developed countries in the region by lack of resources, poor infrastructure, and onset of natural disasters.

57. Many of the low-income countries of the Arab region are unlikely to achieve substantial progress toward achievement of the MDGs in the absence of adequate assistance from the high income states in the region, and from international donors and development agencies. However, the provision of resources alone would be insufficient as a means for achieving the MDGs, unless it is combined with reform of governance, including firm commitment to equitable wealth and service distribution and accountability.

#### *Progress towards achieving MDGs:*

58. *Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty:* The proportion of the population living below the lower national poverty lines in the Arab region does not reflect significant progress. Only a slight decrease in the proportion of the population experiencing income poverty has been achieved from 19.5% in the 1990-1995 periods to 18.2% in the 2000-2004 periods. In contrast, the average estimates of the proportion of the population living below income poverty line for the LDCs show a significant increase from 37.1% in the 1990-1995 periods to 46.8% in the 2000-2004 periods.

59. *Achievement universal primary education:* The enrolment rate in primary education reached 80.5% in the school year 2004/2005, a figure which reflects a 10% increase over the previous 15 years. There is a need for substantial acceleration of the rate of progress in primary education in the low-income countries of the region in order to achieve universal enrolment by 2015.

60. *Promote gender equality and empower women:* There is a marked region-wide improvement in enrolment of girls in schools, but there is still a disparity in favor of boys in primary school education in some of the countries of the region.

61. *Reduce child mortality rate:* Substantial progress has been achieved toward reduction of child and maternal mortality in the Arab countries as shown by the decline of the average from 91 to 70 deaths per 1000 live births during the period from 1990 to 2003. These data suggest that most of the Arab countries are on track to achieve the target of reducing child mortality by one third.

62. *Improve maternal health:* Substantial progress has been made in the Arab region towards improvement of maternal health. However, the current maternal mortality rates (MMRs) and natal care data suggest that the region as a whole is not in a position to meet the maternal health-related targets of the MDGs. According to UNECEF (2004), maternal deaths per 100000 live births have dropped on the average from 465 in 1990 to 337 in 2002. The data suggest a general decline in MMRs with significant variation between the countries of the region.

63. *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases:* The available records suggest that HIV/AIDS is not highly prevalent in the countries of the Arab region, but concern is rising because of the marked increase in the number of reported cases, especially in the LDCs of the region.

#### G. ARAB COUNTRIES PRESENTATIONS

64. **Jordan**, the present status of natural resources and its use is basically dependent on the rate of rainfall, distribution and variability from one season to another. Surface water resources are limited through the River of Jordan. Water scarcity in Jordan is most severe. Recharge of groundwater, natural vegetative cover in the agro- pastoral areas and the length of the growing season are all determined by rainfall. Unfortunately rate of precipitation is declining over the last five decades. In addition, the frequency of drought events has increased to 5 drought years in every 20 years.

65. Land degradation factors are active in rangelands and irrigated lands in Jordan River valley. Land degradation factors include water scarcity, drought events, degradation of vegetative cover, soil erosion (wind and water), soil salinization, reduced soil productivity and soil and water pollution. Land degradation is enhanced through high population growth rate, mismanagement of land resources, over stocking of animals in agro-pastoral areas, and climate change adverse impacts. Recently drought mitigation measures are receiving greater attention and consideration.

66. **United Arab Emirates**, the main land degradation factors are the hyper-aridity of climate, scarcity of rainfall, drought spells, over-extraction of groundwater resources (represent the main water resource) which led to continued decline of water level, salt water intrusion and complete exhaustion of some wells. Irrigation with low quality water caused varied degrees of soil salinization.

67. Loss of vegetative cover as a result of overgrazing or drought invariably lead to soil wind and water erosion and sand encroachment. Cutting of trees and shrubs for fuel caused similar adverse effects. Overstocking of range over the proper carrying capacity led to spreading of non-palatable species and loss of adapted species.

68. Concerted efforts were made to conserve and reuse of marginal rainfall through construction of over 113 dykes, enhance groundwater storage, minimize local floods, planting shrubs and trees and establishing protected agriculture areas. Treatment of wastewater produced by urban centers reached a very high percentage of 95-100%. Treated wastewater is used for local environmental protection, enhancing afforestation, greening of desert areas and improving micro-climatic conditions. Afforestation in UAE exceeds an area of 300000 ha while modern irrigation techniques were introduced to more than 80% of the cultivated areas. Laws and legislations were issued relevant to combating desertification. Multiple research activities were carried out in collaboration with regional and international organization including ICARDA, ACSAD, and IFAD.

69. **Algeria**, degradation factors at the Northern area include deforestation, and mountainous areas are affected by erosion processes and over exploitation of the natural resources. Rangelands of varied vegetation types are degraded at different degrees under arid and semi-arid conditions. In the southern areas vast areas are affected by mobile sand dunes and sand encroachment.

70. Activities to combat desertification started in the sixties, including reforestation, protection and rehabilitation of eroded lands. In the seventies, a "Green Belt" was established in the arid and semi-arid areas to protect an estimated 3 million ha. The green belt included forest, fruit trees as well as re-vegetation of rangelands. The nineties witnessed the extension of the Green Belt to rehabilitate rural areas adopt stakeholders participation in the various activities of management of the Green Belt. New concepts were introduced including economic viability and social acceptability.

71. The National plan for Agricultural Development of the Rural areas was initiated in 1999. It included five programmes, agriculture production of consumed commodities, adaptation of appropriate farming systems, restoration of economic goods and services of forest areas, protection of the steppe and arid rangelands and rehabilitation of degraded lands in the varied zones of the country. Financial funds were secured from direct and indirect sources. Investments were encouraged in the various zones.

72. **Bahrain**, Scarcity of land area, progressive increase of population and competition among varied urban, industrial, tourism and agricultural land use are the main driving forces of land degradation. Degradation factors include over exploitation of groundwater resources, leading to declining of water quantity and deterioration of quality. Urban encroachment led to loss of agricultural lands adjacent to urban areas. Outdoor camping and trafficking of powerful cars led to degradation of soil qualities and loss of vegetative cover. Management of wastes generated by the diversified land uses enhanced areas of land-fills. Soil materials were imported to enhance land area of the island. Land degradation is clearly manifested by losses of natural springs and palm trees that constituted the historical fame of Bahrain.

73. Efforts to combat degradation factors included formulation of environmental strategy, establishing national committees, and specialized institutions in collaboration with international and regional organizations including UNEP, FAO and others. Other efforts include the formulation of regulations for the reuse of treated wastewater, establishing natural protectorates and urban planning. Future activities are geared towards capacity building, training and awareness programmes.

74. **Tunisia**, the national report defines direct land degradation factors including human factors, overgrazing, irrational exploitation of land and irrigation water, diversified land ownership and deforestation, while indirect factors would include; rapid demographic increase, poverty, illiteracy and economic constraints. It is estimated that over 11000 ha of productive lands are desertified yearly due to erosion processes and flash floods.

75. Lands are classified as follows; 6% of the total area is non-degraded, 23% slightly degraded, 32% of medium degradation, 17% severely degraded and 22% desert areas. The main land degradation forms are; wind and water erosion, sand encroachment, salinization of irrigated lands, water logging and degradation of vegetative cover. These degradation forms adversely affect food security, infrastructure, and employment, migration from rural areas, health and environmental safety constraints.

76. Combating desertification has environmental, economic, social and institutional dimensions, activities include planning at different levels, institutional reforms, legislative activities, assessment, monitoring, and awareness campaigns at varied levels, supporting needed research activities and seeking funds from the various sources. Such integrated activities led to proper preparation of NAP, planning of district and local multiple programmes, implementation of pilot projects, soil and water conservation, re-vegetation of rangelands, afforestation of forest areas, combating sand encroachment and soil salinization as well as rehabilitation of degraded lands. Representative activities implemented were cited.

77. **Saudi Arabia**, the main factors of land degradation are over-grazing of rangelands due to several human activities including digging of water points, variation of herd size, and use of modern transportation means to move animals, providing subsidies, cultivation of rangelands, deforestation leading to loss of forests and biodiversity.

78. Conservation efforts included formulation of strategy for sustainable development in the year 2005, in addition to implementation of NAP. Activities include descriptive as well as quantitative parameters of

elements measured including seasonal assessment of plant cover in rangelands. More than 15 natural protectorate and 7 public parks were established. Over 27 dykes were constructed for water conservation. Five major projects for sand dunes fixation and protection against sand encroachment were carried out. Afforestation activities were enhanced. Public awareness was achieved through activities of the private sector in addition to training and capacity building.

79. The role of the Regional Drought Monitoring & Early Warning Center and its functions were discussed including mitigation of the adverse impacts of drought in the fields of agriculture, animal wealth, environment and socio-economic sectors. Proper seasonal predictions and warnings are among the main objectives of the center. Other objectives include monitoring of natural climate variability, soil water deficiency, information exchange with Global climate centers, compiling pertinent national data and parameters, survey, photograph and document the adverse impacts of drought throughout the country. The center aims to carry out field research, establish databases, and exchange knowledge with Arab centers as well as offer relevant training programmes.

80. **Sudan** is endowed with the largest areas of arable lands, rangelands, forest areas in the Arab Region, and the highest per capita share of water resources. Unfortunately most of these vast resources suffer from varied degradation factors. These factors include mismanagement practices with inefficient irrigation and drainage systems, inappropriate tillage operations, irrational cropping patterns, expanding soil salinization and water logging. Reoccurring seasonal flooding of the Nile River and its tributaries lead to enhanced soil and water erosion and silting of dam reservoirs. Deforestation and over-grazing lead to degradation of land cover in the arid areas. These areas suffer from increased drought events. Despite the availability of large groundwater resources yet these valuable resources are under-exploited.

81. Combating land degradation in Sudan is facing many constraints including inferior economic and social conditions, reoccurring of natural disasters including major flooding, political instability, and major conflicts. Sudan formulated its NAP (UNCCD) in the year 2000 which indicates that 82% of the total population is affected by desertification to varied extents. Earlier activities included meetings and workshops to set priorities of actions, establishing specialized institution to coordinate activities, contribution of civil societies, adoption of participatory approach, awareness campaigns, capacity building, formulation of pertinent legislation and specific projects.

82. **Syria**, land use categories include vast areas of rainfed and irrigated lands rangelands and forestlands. Areas threatened by desertification factors exceed 59% of the total area of Syria. Active land degradation factors include loss of vegetative cover in rangelands through over-grazing and mismanagement practices and in forestlands through deforestation and forest fires. Adverse impacts of loss of vegetative cover include enhanced erosion processes by wind and water, enhanced dust storms, increased sand encroachment on infrastructure and serious losses of land productivity. Other land degradation factors include soil salinization of irrigated lands, soil pollution, over-exploitation of soil resources, and irrational use of agricultural inputs as well as mismanagement of soil and water resources.

83. Population pressures, varied climatic conditions and enhanced drought events cause added pressures on the use and productivity of available resources. Adverse socio-economic impacts of land degradation include serious losses of land productivity that led to exclusion of large areas from agricultural investment, decline of areas of rangelands and its animal component, loss of jobs, enhanced migration from rural areas to urban centers, adverse impacts on microclimate conditions and national food security.

84. The present decade witnesses progressive and keen interest to combat land degradation processes expressed in carrying out integrated projects for the rehabilitation of Badia, forestlands, cultivated lands and planned activities at both the short and medium ranges.

85. **Oman**, major areas of soil resources formed on slopes in the dry valleys are liable to water erosion through flash floods due to sporadic dense showers. Major degradation factors include droughts, wind erosion, sand encroachment and soil salinity. Salt water intrusion to water wells is the major factors of soils salinization. Other factors include degradation of natural land cover, overgrazing and soil pollution by waste materials, chemicals and pesticides.

86. Efforts to combat land degradation included building of dykes to protect against flash floods and curtail water erosion processes, rational use of soil inputs and chemicals, use of modern irrigation techniques, proper waste management, limiting urban encroachment on productive lands, research activities and awareness programs, issuing pertinent legislations, protect rangelands as well as combating pollution.

87. **Palestine**, total areas of land used for agriculture cover 30.5% of total area of Palestine 87% of the cultivated lands are rainfed and 13% are irrigated. Rangelands occupy vast areas. Land degradation factors include fragmented ownership, soil salinization, (Jordan Valley Region), overgrazing (Eastern Slopes), deforestation and soil erosion. Population increase at 3.8% per year exerts high pressures on available natural resources and enhances urban encroachment on productive lands.

88. Political conflicts and war incidents cause huge adverse impacts on land use and its development. Nevertheless, few projects and programmes are being implemented to curtail land degradation processes as much as possible. These efforts include; conservation of agro-biodiversity, land reclamation, improved resource management and mapping systems.

89. **Qatar**, despite the highly scarce arable lands, estimated at only 5.6% of the total area of Qatar yet cultivated lands suffer from salinity and inferior soil properties. Natural vegetative is poor with stunted growth of rangelands and shrubs which are over-grazed during the short rainy season causing sand encroachment and wind erosion. Water resources used for agricultural production depend mainly on groundwater resources which suffer from over-extraction causing deterioration of water quality which lead to soil salinity and soil surface crusting. Combating land degradation processes are being carried out through collaboration with regional and international organizations including FAO and UNCCD.

90. **Kuwait**, harsh climatic conditions and terrain attributes combine to enhance land degradation in Kuwait. Forms of land degradation include dust and sand storms carrying fine sediments across the north boundaries, wind erosion of soil resources, sand encroachment on infrastructure and strategic installations, enhanced saline habitats, soil salinity, eroded top soil layers, poor vegetative cover, degraded range areas, and over extraction of groundwater resources.

91. Efforts to combat land degradation include concerted efforts of afforestation and replanting of degraded range areas, cultivation of salt tolerant plants and shrubs, establishing of natural parks and green built through the northern areas within a general plan to combat erosion processes, and improve the micro climate.

92. **Lebanon**, prevailing climatic features are semi-arid and arid conditions with large variations due to terrain attributes of varied elevations. Desertification is attributed mainly to human activities of deforestation, forest fires, overgrazing, and over-exploitation of surface as well as groundwater resources, inappropriate land use, and urban encroachment and climate change events. Population pressures, migration from rural to urban areas, poverty and conflict episodes are aggravating land degradation in rural areas. Desertification prone areas cover about 60% of the total area of Lebanon with several hot spots projecting of water and wind erosion, soil salinization and pollution.

93. Important measures were taken to combat desertification including the ratification of major environmental conventions UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD. NAP was elaborated in 2003 with policies, initiatives and programmes developed for its implementation. Among the main activities are identification of benchmarks and indicators, implementation of pilot projects, awareness programmes, pertinent legislation, and institutional coordination, establishing national committees, councils and participating in regional and sub-regional action programmes.

94. **Libya**, Desertification in Libya is attributed to impacts of climatic and human factors. Extreme variations of the rate and distribution of rainfall, over-exploitation of scarce lands and mostly non-renewable groundwater resources, high rate of population increase resulting in rapid development of demand for agricultural products, urban encroachment on productive lands, chemical pollution, over-grazing, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, enhanced wind and water erosion of soil resources.

95. A national programme for afforestation was carried out more than 47,000 ha. Dykes and cisterns were established to conserve runoff water. Protected areas and parks were established to conserve biodiversity and enhance environmental stability. Through the last decade a National Committee to Combat desertification and formulate the NAP was established through cooperation with ACSAD. 1999-2000 witnessed the initiation of a programme for rehabilitation of rangelands and enhancement of its productivity through curtailing overgrazing, allow range-plants to complete its lifecycle, in addition to adoption of the participatory approach for the concerned stakeholders. Remote sensing was used to specify hot spots, and follow up on soil erosion processes and migration of sand dunes.

96. **Egypt**, land degradation factors are diversified in the different agriculture systems. Soil salinity is caused by inefficient drainage, high water table, use of low quality water and salt water intrusion in coastal areas. Soil salinity is aggravated by high evaporation due to climate aridity. Soil and water are polluted from multiple sources. Urban encroachment is continued despite pertinent legislations. High cropping intensity and soil mismanagement in certain areas lower soil productivity, due to overuse of agricultural inputs including chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and use of non-conventional water resources of varied qualities. Over-exploitation of reclaimed desert areas beyond its capacities is also a factor. Overgrazing of natural range areas in the northern coastal areas enhances the impacts of wind and water erosion, and sand encroachment of the western fringes of the Old Nile Valley along with mobility of dunes in some reclaimed desert areas.

97. Concerted activities to combat desertification have been carried out. UNCCD was ratified in 1996 and the NAP was finalized in 2005. Measures to counteract factors of desertification included establishing an intensive network of drainage canals of buried tiles and open ditches, adopting the integrated pest management control system and prohibiting the import and use of pesticides of long persistence in the soils, and afforestation and establishing a continuous network of wind breaks to protect the cultivated lands, expansion of organic and bio-farming, and processing of numerous research findings. Improving extension services and encouraging the activities of private sector as well as investments from abroad, complementing the available legislations and pertinent laws.

98. **Mauritania** is one of the most arid and most prone countries to desertification in Northern Africa as more than 75% of its total area is affected by desertification processes. During the severe droughts, the 150mm/year zone of rainfall moved southward to replace a higher rainfall zone of 280mm/year. More than one third of the total population is adversely affected by factors of desertification. Drought is one of the main factors of desertification where rainfall could be reduced by as much as 80% of the yearly average. Desertification include the severe degradation of plant cover where total area of rangelands was reduced by 38%, forest areas by 29% and curtailing of cultivated lands in southern areas. Other impacts of land degradation are soil erosion processes, soil salinity and loss of productivity.

99. Combating desertification measures included establishing a Ministry of Environmental Affairs. An observatory for human development was established to monitor water resources, rangelands, forest areas and organization of urban areas. Policies and environmental strategy were formulated to combat poverty through rehabilitation of degraded areas. Although NAP was formulated in 2006, yet many projects were implemented in the previous two decades to combat desertification and land degradation.

100. **Yemen**, suffers from varied factors of desertification. Degraded lands are estimated at 5.7 million ha representing 12.4% of the total area of Yemen. Degradation of lands are caused by various factors including wind erosion, pollution, and soil salinity, soil physical deterioration, sand and encroachment on productive lands, deforestation, over-grazing of rangelands and mismanagement of cultivated areas.

101. Land degradation factors are still very active in Yemen due to human adverse impacts including population increase of over 3.0%, lack of funding, increased human demands for food and fuel, continued migration from rural areas to urban centers and enhanced waste materials causing environmental pollution. Other human impacts led to reduction of forest area and rangelands by 7.5% in addition to loss of plant cover, biodiversity and land productivity.

102. Activities to combat desertification were enhanced especially in the last decade. Despite lack of appropriate funding and various needs for enhancing institutional set up, coordinated planning and the need for



relevant legislation, yet, efforts to combat land degradation are being enhanced through the implementation of different projects, preparation of land use maps, use of GIS for agriculture and environmental zones, mechanical and biological sand dune fixation, establishing protected areas, protecting biodiversity, and issuing a law for environmental protection.

103. One of the major latest developments is the preparation of an integrated strategy till the year 2025. For the rational use of water resources, protecting groundwater, and reuse of treated wastewater in appropriate agricultural activities, introducing modern irrigation techniques, and combating deforestation through introduction of alternatives to halt cutting trees for fuel.

#### H. CONFERENCE DELIBERATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

104. During the deliberations and discussions of the Conference several significant issues emerged which merit to be addressed and to be taken into consideration. Among the main issues are the following:

105. The issue of credibility, harmonization and exchange of data, received considerable discussions, as discrepancies and contradictions were observed for data and information reported by different institutions within the same country or by different sources and organizations active in the region. Such discrepancies were attributed to several factors including inefficient methods of assessment, various sources of information within the same country, and the lack of coordination among national institutions. The significance of availability of credible and accurate data was stressed to achieve sound planning, meaningful decisions and enhanced efficiency of allocation of funds, implementation of appropriate activities and proper monitoring and assessment of activities and outcomes.

106. The need for synergies among activities and programmes for implementing commitments to UNCCD and other major conventions are needed to secure prevention of duplication, wasting of efforts, coordination among the concerned institutions, efficiency of expenditure and use of available funding, efficient use of human resources, better performance, identification of gaps and improved planning.

107. Despite the large efforts cited for combating desertification that were carried out by the Arab countries in cooperation with organizations active in the Region, yet, desertification and land degradation processes are still active in the Arab countries with continued pressures on the available and scarce natural resources. Multiple constraints for combating desertification were recognized in the discussions including lack of appropriate national funding and funding from abroad, lack of efficient adoption of participatory approach of stakeholders, need for more relevant legislations and laws with efficient implementation mechanism, the need for establishing thematic databases, enhancing exchange of information, lessons learned and success stories for combating desertification among the countries of region and giving ample consideration to capacity building and institutional coordination.

108. The adverse impacts of local and regional conflicts and wars are wide spread in several locations in the Region and such conflicts cause severe problems to environmental safety and enhancing land degradation in addition to loss of lives, deterioration of socio-economic conditions and hampering progress towards combating desertification.

109. Conference deliberations stressed the significance of enhancing regional and sub-regional cooperation among countries of the region in collaboration with the Arab and regional organizations active in the region. It was recognized that several factors of land and water degradation do not recognize the political boundaries which dictate the need for collaborative efforts among the countries concerned.

110. The Conference discussions stressed the need for the unification of definitions, indicators and benchmarks among the various institutions of the region to achieve efficient exchange of knowledge, allow for proper analysis and meaningful assessment, monitoring of processes of land degradation, as well as, credible follow up on efficiency and outcomes of implemented activities.

111. Drought events and impacts of climate change are increasing in the Region. Conference deliberations stressed the needs to elaborate mechanisms to guide and assist the Arab countries to advance their studies and

investigations for mitigation, adaptation and coping with reoccurring droughts and anticipated climate change impacts. The needs for establishing a regional Early Warning Center and efficient forecasting for drought were stressed taking into consideration present available facilities in the Region.

112. Scientific research efforts particularly for demand driven investigation pertinent to land degradation problems require greater support, funding and development of facilities at the national level as well as coordination at the regional level.

113. The need to give greater support to issues of agriculture and rural developments to achieve MDG's especially in case of LDC's in the region. Greater support and cooperation are requested from greater developed countries of the region, Arab and regional organizations as well as regional and international funding agents capable of providing sustainable and effective funding.

114. Discussions during the Conference emphasized the need to enhance cooperation and coordination among the Arab regional and international organizations active in the region to assist the implementation of NAP's especially that of UNCCD and other main conventions. The need for curtailing duplication and overlap of activities of the various organizations was emphasized.

### **III. MEETING EVALUATION**

115. An evaluation questionnaire was distributed in order to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Regional Conference. As confirmed by the initial evaluation questionnaire filled by 32 stakeholders/participants (including the representatives of 12 ESCWA member states), the overall feedback received was positive as the majority of participants noted that the conference achieved its objectives; that it has been up to their expectations; and that the conclusions and recommendations were significant. Some of the participants expressed some concern about the application of the recommendations due to financial, administrative, technical and political constraints. The majority of participants also requested additional follow-up action on the Conference, especially regarding cooperation and coordination among countries and concerned organizations, and follow-up on the implementation of recommendations.

## Annex I

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## Annex II

### **AGENDA**

#### **TUESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2007**

08:00 – 9:00 - Registration

#### **Opening Statements**

- 9:00 – 10:00 - Introductory and opening speeches by:
- Dr. Khaled Ben Mahmoud, Director of Division of Land and Water Uses, ACSAD
  - Dr. Habib El Habr, Regional Director of UNEP/ROWA
  - Dr. Anhar Hegazi, Director, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, ESCWA
  - Dr. Mohamed At-Twajiri, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, League of Arab States
- 10:00 – 10:15 - “The Arabian Deserts” Documentary Film (*A joint UNEP-ACSAD Production*)
- 10:15 – 10:30 - Coffee Break

#### **Session I: Regional Cooperation in the Prevention and Reversal of Land Degradation**

- 10:30 – 10:50 - Promoting Regional Cooperation in Reversing Land Degradation in the ESCWA Region-ESCWA
- 10:50 – 11:10 - Regional Cooperation in the Area of Desertification-UNEP
- 11:10 – 11:30 - Discussion
- 11:30 – 12:10 - Presentations by interested Regional/National Organizations
- 12:10 – 12:30 - Discussion
- 12:30 – 13:30 - Lunch Break

#### **Session II: Presentation of Regional Reports on the Thematic Clusters of CSD-16**

- 13:30 – 13:50 - Agriculture in the Arab World - AOAD
- 13:50 – 14:05 - Discussion
- 14:05 – 14:25 - Rural Development in the Arab World - AOAD
- 14:25 – 14:40 - Discussion
- 14:40 – 14:55 - Degradation of Land Resources in the Arab Region - AOAD

#### **Session III: Presentation of Regional Reports on the Thematic Clusters of CSD-16**

- 14:55 – 15:15 - Land Resources in the Arab World - ACSAD
- 15:15 – 15:30 - Discussion
- 15:30 – 15:45 - Coffee break
- 15:45 – 16:05 - Desertification in the Arab World - ACSAD
- 16:05 – 16:20 - Discussion
- 16:20 – 16:40 - Drought in the Arab World - ICARDA
- 16:40 – 16:55 - Discussion

#### **WEDNESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2007**

#### **Session IV: Round Table Discussion on the Role of the Regional Center for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning**

- 09:00 – 09:30 - Drought Monitoring and Early Warning
- 09:30 – 10:00 - Discussion
- 10:00 – 10:15 - Coffee Break

**Session V:      Country papers**

- 10:15 – 10:30    - Country Paper-Algeria
- 10:30 – 10:45    - Country Paper- Bahrain
- 10:45 – 11:00    - Country Paper-Bahrain
- 11:00 – 11:15    - Country Paper-Egypt
- 11:15 – 11:45    - Country Paper-Jordan
- 11:45 – 12:00    - Country Paper-Kuwait
- 12:00 – 12:15    - Coffee Break
- 12:15 – 12:45    - Country Paper-Lebanon
- 12:45 – 13:15    - Country Paper-Libya
- 13:15 – 14:15    - Lunch break
- 14:15 – 14:30    - Country Paper-Mauritania
- 14:30 – 14:45    - Country Paper-Oman
- 14:45 – 15:00    - Country Paper-Palestine
- 15:00 – 15:15    - Country Paper-Qatar
- 15:15 – 15:45    - Country Paper-Saudi Arabia
- 15:45 – 16:00    - Coffee Break
- 16:00 – 16:15    - Country Paper-Sudan
- 16:15 – 16:45    - Country Paper-Syria

**THURSDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2007**

**Session V:      Country papers (continued)**

- 09:15 – 09:45    - Country Paper-Tunisia
- 09:45 – 10:00    - Country Paper-UAE
- 10:00 – 10:30    - Country Paper-Yemen
- 10:30 – 11:00    - Coffee Break

**Session VI:      Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 11:00 – 13:00    - Evaluation
- Closing Session and closing remarks