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## Climate Vulnerable Forum Regional Workshop for the Middle East and North Africa

Geneva, Switzerland, 28-29 May 2015

### CONCEPT NOTE

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#### Overview

The Climate Vulnerable Forum Regional Workshop for the Middle East and North Africa aims to identify headline climate change policy priorities for vulnerable developing countries of the region. It also deliberately facilitates the exchange of knowledge to share on challenges, successes and experiences in climate change policy implementation between countries regionally. The event provides an opportunity for states to discuss collective policy priorities for the region outside of formal negotiation or institutional channels, and for other stakeholders to interact with these discussions. It will include a special focus on the stability and security implications of climate change and complex transnational dynamics relating to food, migration and water. The outcomes of the Workshop will feed into the Climate Vulnerable Forum's global deliberations and serve as the input for countries from the Middle East and North Africa towards its forward work.

#### Background

The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) is a semi-formal and non-exclusive cooperation mechanism for vulnerable developing countries focused specifically on climate change policy. The CVF is hosting regional workshops during 2014-15 in Africa, Asia, Central America/Caribbean, the Middle East and the Pacific to inform its global advocacy and policy efforts ahead of UNFCCC COP21 on the basis of a more representative understanding of climate change action priorities for developing countries vulnerable to climate change. These workshops are also a key input to the future collaborative work of countries through the CVF itself, including in the run-up to and during COP21, as well as for the period beyond 2015.

The Middle East/North Africa (MENA) Regional Workshop is the input mechanism for countries from the region to these initiatives, and the first activity of the CVF to involve countries from this region. Its conclusions will directly inform a Global Consultation of the hosts of all the CVF regional workshops of 2014-15 taking place in Bonn in June 2015 during the UNFCCC inter-sessional there.

#### Regional Context: Water, Food & Security

The MENA region is highly vulnerable to the direct effects of a warmer planet, in particular, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has consistently highlighted, due the propensity of an already arid region to experience increasingly extreme heat, drought, water stress, and associated agricultural pressures resulting from climate change. Recurrent hydrological and agricultural droughts result from unique

exposure and biophysical sensitivity compounded by socio-economic, security and governance factors.

Important water stress implications, in particular, have been highlighted by the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) that is an outcome of a collaborative effort between the United Nations and the League of Arab States (LAS). Low-elevation zones of the region, especially the Nile delta, are also among the most populous regions in the world vulnerable to the rise in global sea levels. Human impacts projected include increased social pressures to additional risks of violent conflict in a conflict hotspot region especially over narrowing access to livelihood sustaining natural resources upon which the majority of the vulnerable poor in MENA rely. The stability and security effects for a region experiencing multiple armed conflicts are serious: a 2010-11 food price shock coincided neatly, for instance, with the advent of important social and political upheaval during just this period.

A range of indirect and trans-border challenges unique to the region, moreover, are of growing concern. Food security and food price stability, in particular, are a major concern given that MENA is one of the most significant food importing regions in the world. The food price escalation in 2010-11 occurred as a synchrony of local food production shocks tied to extreme regional drought together with similar agricultural failures in other key food exporting countries far from the MENA region. IPCC and specialized research by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University and the Nansen Initiative have also indicated the extent to which climate change stimulates migration and displacement due to climatic pressures on vulnerable communities, particularly in Africa, Asia and small island developing states. Such migration is already widely hypothesized to be embedded in current flows of economic migrants, for which MENA is both a major transit and destination region.

Vulnerabilities and dynamics of a transnational nature are extremely difficult to capture in nationally focused vulnerability assessments. So for instance, contrary to IPCC and regional modeling, MENA as a whole is not among the world's most vulnerable regions as identified by several recent comprehensive composite global climate change impact and vulnerability/capacity studies/indices including from DARA, GermanWatch and Notre Dame (ND-GAIN), which all measure a wide range of different national factors together.

Despite the major challenges faced, the Middle East, and to a lesser extent North Africa, can also fall between gaps as a region of recognized vulnerability due to predominant categorization practices. There are just three Least Developed Countries in the greater MENA region, all in Africa, and no small islands, two of the key countries groups recognized by the UNFCCC for their special vulnerabilities to climate change. Furthermore, MENA has never before had representation in the CVF, which includes 20 members from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific.

MENA as a region has nevertheless been increasingly active in climate change responses, including a track record encompassing a range of increasingly sophisticated national, transnational and regional initiatives on climate and related issues. The potential for climate change-affected water shortages to inflame international tensions has, for instance, been considerably offset by deliberate collaborative water resource governance and cooperation efforts. Water on the whole appears to have provided more means for cooperation than for tension with the Nile Basin Initiative and Jordan agreement examples of successful multi-decadal efforts in the water domain.

At national level, new climate change or environmental strategies have been developed in numerous countries, including Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and the UAE. The region also hosts the world's leading renewable energy organization, the International Renewable

Energy Agency (IRENA), established in 2009 and based in Abu Dhabi. Regional climate change efforts are also considerable as exemplified by the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative and activities of the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, UNDP and other key cooperation and assistance actors present in the region.

### **Outputs, Outcomes & Follow-Up**

The CVF Regional Workshop for MENA will draw on country experience to identify an up-to-date understanding of the types of challenges, successes, needs and gaps experienced by developing nations as they strive to implement climate change policies across the region. In doing so the workshop will identify more effective responses to climate change pertinent to MENA together with recommendations for actors at different levels (national, regional and global). It also aims to expand involvement in this policy dialogue beyond the 20 countries from the other regions that are currently members of the CVF: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Kiribati, Madagascar, Maldives, Nepal, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

Key **outputs** from the two days of the CVF workshop will include clarity on the experience of developing countries in MENA in implementing national/regional climate change policies, in terms of:

- The most significant challenges faced in the implementation of climate action (whether programmatic, geographic, governance, finance, technology or in other respects), inclusive of adaptation and mitigation
- Projects, programmes or aspects of climate policy that have met with the most success at national or regional levels – knowledge that other countries within and beyond the region could benefit from
- Chief needs and priorities for achieving further progress and the advancement of the response to climate change on the ground (adaptation and mitigation), including a discrete set of policy recommendations for enhanced climate action targeting national, regional and global progress

Expected **outcomes** of the CVF workshop include:

- Shared understanding of lessons learned from adaptation and mitigation work in the region and how these might be applied to future projects/programmes
- Identification of the most important risks, solutions and needs for vulnerable countries of the region
- Shared agreement on future climate change policy priorities
- Identification of promising new areas for international and South-South collaboration in addressing climate change building on exchange of knowledge on policy response success
- Promotion of local/regional public awareness, increased representativeness of CVF efforts and inputs from MENA to the CVF's work focused on COP21 and other climate-relevant policy domains during and post-2015

The workshop is **followed-up** through a Global Consultation in June 2015 in Bonn to review the findings of all the regional workshops collectively and inform global level actions and advocacy of the Forum ahead of COP21 with the objective of ensuring strong and representative inputs of vulnerable countries.

### **Structure, Participants & Methodology**

The **structure** of two-day Workshop will consist of open public as well as closed segments, with a balance of presentations with question and answers together with group working sessions for the detailed examination and synthesis of issues. Opening

and focused sessions will engage and inform broader groups of stakeholders, the public and the media.

**Participants** in the Workshop are to include:

- Government officials responsible for climate change policy implementation (inclusive of adaptation and mitigation) from developing countries vulnerable to climate change from across MENA
- MENA regional organization representatives based in Geneva and internationally

Guest participants for open/focused sessions include:

- International organizations, agencies and assistance actors active in MENA
- Representatives of relevant academia, private sector, NGOs and other civil society groups based in Geneva
- Members of the diplomatic corps and information media (for open sessions) based in Geneva

Sponsoring is available a limited number of designated national representatives from developing countries (one per country) within the region to attend the workshop as facilitated by UNDP Geneva in accordance with standard UN travel rule and practices. Eligible countries include: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen. International organizations and other international participants are kindly requested to defray their own travelling expenses.

The Workshop **methodology** follows a four-step process of:

- 1) Presentations from different countries and organizations on lessons-learned and experience in climate change policy implementation
- 2) A select number of thematic focus sessions with external experts on critical topics: climate and security; and transnational challenges of food, migration and water
- 3) Facilitated breakout group brainstorming of key challenges, successes, needs and forward priorities
- 4) Reporting back and facilitated group synthesis in plenary formulating a discrete set of recommendations for enhancing the response to climate change through actions at national, regional and global levels

The limited number of focused sessions enables in-depth examination of additional specific topics of special interest and will comprise expert presentations, question and answer sessions with government authorities in plenary discussion.

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