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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels  
First meeting  
Beirut, 5 December 2018

**Information note***1. Background*

Global energy markets have undergone substantial changes in recent years with oil price fluctuations along with the change in population demographics and the downside economic risks that still threaten the energy sector. New patterns of energy demand and supply have also emerged due to the breakthrough in fossil-fuel and low-carbon technologies. The “Hydraulic Fracturing” and related technologies have created new ways of producing hydrocarbons, in addition to solar panels and batteries, wind turbines and carbon capture and storage which among other technological innovations are changing the face of the energy industry.

The fossil fuels industry is now at a pivotal point in its evolution and we are now on the cusp of a transformation. The rise of new technologies, coupled with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Agreement, are key factors in changing the future energy mix and sustainability of energy systems.

By 2050, the share of fossil fuels in the global energy mix will be at least 40% even under a climate change scenario that meets a 2°C target. Energy for sustainable development has to be looked at in a comprehensive and integrated manner that considers where current energy systems are today, where they should be in the medium- to long-term to meet sustainability goals. A realistic and achievable energy outlook will recognize that improving energy efficiency and increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix will be insufficient to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. It is necessary to engage in a dialogue on the role of fossil fuels in the coming decades.

In order to accelerate collective efforts towards these goals and help member States formulate sustainable energy policies and strategies, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Committee on Energy (CoE) at its eleventh session in Cairo (14-16 May 2017) recommended to the ESCWA Secretariat to form an expert group on fossil fuels, equivalent to a subcommittee of the Committee on Energy, working in accordance with the ESCWA rules of procedure and United Nations regulations in that regard, which shall present a report of its activities to the Committee at its next session<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of ESCWA CoE :<https://www.unescwa.org/events/committee-energy-11th-session>

## 2. Scope

The Arab region is in the midst of a transition from being a major supplier of energy to international world markets towards an increasingly important energy demand market in its own right. This transition raises considerable challenges but also opportunities for the coming decades.

Although Arab countries exhibit different energy-consumption levels, they all share their reliance on fossil fuels for their domestic energy demand with fossil fuels accounting for around 96% of the region's own energy needs.

In this context, it is crucial for Arab energy importers and exporters alike, to move towards advanced clean energy technologies and develop a more rational use of the fossil fuel resources by boosting their productivity and optimizing their inputs into the energy mix through technology and innovation, policy reforms, economic diversification, sharing of best practices and enhancing interregional cooperation and collaboration.

The scope of this event is to form the ESCWA Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels, in accordance with the recommendation of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of ESCWA CoE and create a platform to support research and enhance collaboration and sharing of best practices in the development and the commercial introduction of new technology and best practices.

## 3. Objectives

The first Meeting of the “*Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels*” aims to provide a forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and exchange of information on: promoting sustainable and clean energy production, distribution and consumption of fossil fuels, role of natural gas, methane and carbon management, technology transfer and innovation, climate change actions, and any new initiatives and topics that are in line with the strategic framework and work programme of ESCWA.

The objective of this first Meeting is to establish the “*Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels*” and formulate its yearly regional program, clearly defining its objectives and activities of short- and long-term priorities of ESCWA member countries and build on issues that have emerged from the energy market on the sustainable production and use of fossil fuels and climate change actions.

This meeting will also include a discussion and share of experiences and views on the energy market development and outlook, major challenges, opportunities and synergies at the regional and Arab national levels. International experiences will be included in order to contribute in creating a regional platform for knowledge.

## 4. Back to Back activities

The first Meeting of the “*Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels*” will be held on 5 December 2018 in Beirut, Lebanon, back to back with the 1<sup>st</sup> MENA Energy Economics Conference under theme “Oil price Dynamics and Energy Transitions in the MENA region”, jointly organized by the Institute of Financial Economics (AUB), ESCWA and Oxford Institute for Energy Studies of the United Kingdom on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018 at the American University of Beirut (AUB) Campus. Further information is provided in the Concept Note and draft Agenda of the Conference (Attached).

## 5. Participants

Participants will include experts and eminent specialists, and representatives of Governments, national oil and gas companies, the private sector, international organizations and non-governmental organizations and other selected international organizations will participate in this meeting.

## 6. *Date and venue*

The first Meeting of the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels will be held at the UN-House, ESCWA premises in Beirut, Lebanon, on the 5th of December 2018. Registration will commence at 8:30 a.m. Participants at the meeting of the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels will also attend the 1<sup>st</sup> MENA Energy Economics Conference, at the AUB-Issam Fares Institute on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018 which starts at 9:00 a.m.

## 7. *Languages of the session*

The meeting materials will be presented in Arabic, English and French languages with simultaneous translation.

## 8. *Accommodation and transportation*

Each participant shall undertake the preparation for securing hotel related to her/his participation.

## 9. *Entry visas*

Participants are requested to apply for the following preparation related to her/his visa (**participant is required to contact the Lebanese Embassy at their respective countries**), and any other requirements for travelling to Lebanon.

Additional logistical information about how to obtain entry visa to Lebanon, as well as any special arrangements made for hotel reservations, or other additional information will be provided to participants in due course. For more inquiries for the visa, please visit the following website: <http://www.general-security.gov.lb/ar>

## 10. *Correspondence*

All session-related correspondence should be sent to the following ESCWA officials:

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