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

Expert Group Meeting on “Promoting market-driven access to sustainable modern energy services in the Arab rural regions”

18-19 April 2016

Beirut, Lebanon.

### INFORMATION NOTE

#### I. BACKGROUND

Although considerable advances in rural electrification have taken place in most countries of the region, there are still more than 40 million people in the Arab world who still don't have access to modern energy services, most of whom living in rural areas. Connecting these areas to the grid requires high funding cost, and with little perceived return on investment due to lower load demands and the dispersed nature of rural areas, national governments with already constrained resources are more likely to prioritize funding to economic sectors with potentially high growth rates.

Access to modern energy services is essential for advancing sustainable development in rural areas. While renewable energy (RE) can deliver considerable benefits to rural social services in health, education, entertainment, etc., energy use needs to pay for itself in order to secure long-term energy sustainability in rural areas. The rural productive sector should take the lead in adopting RE technology as tools for enhanced productivity. Thus RE technology will stimulate local economic development through integration in the rural value-chains in agriculture, small agro-businesses and industries, rural traditional manufacturing, etc.

Distributed appropriate renewable energy technologies (RET) can provide energy access to dispersed rural communities at considerably lower investment cost than extending the grid. With no commitment for funding support, national governments can promote a favorable environment for the private sector to invest in RET in rural areas through relevant policies and adapted and operational regulatory frameworks. There are however many barriers that are preventing the creation of a market demand for renewable energy technologies. Some of these barriers range from educating prospective investors on RET and prospective buyers on the value of the energy services, training local technicians on RET installation, operation and maintenance, to building the national capacity in the policy, technical and financial sectors to improve the penetration of RET in rural areas.

#### II. SCOPE

Within the context of its work on sustainable energy the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia is organizing a two-day expert group meeting (EGM) on “Promoting market-driven access

to modern energy services in the Arab rural regions”. The EGM will focus on the enabling drivers for promoting market-driven dissemination of renewable energy in rural areas.

This activity falls under the Development Account (DA) project on “*Building Capacities in Developing Appropriate Green Technologies for Improving the Livelihood of Rural communities in the ESCWA Region*” which aims to strengthen the capacity of countries in the Arab region to mainstream appropriate green technology initiatives into national development programmes and policies, in order to enhance livelihoods of rural communities. The project focuses on:

- a) Building the capacity of public and private development institutions on assessing the appropriate green technology needs in rural areas and on understanding the mechanisms that support the mainstreaming of appropriate green technology initiatives,
- b) Enhancing the knowledge of policymakers and decision makers on policy options and building their capacity for using policy tools to enable an environment conducive for investment in appropriate green technologies in rural areas in the region.

### **III. OBJECTIVES**

The expert group meeting aims to highlight the drivers that are necessary to establish and sustain market-driven dissemination of appropriate RET in Arab rural areas. The EGM will attempt to identify the fundamentals as well as contextual conditions that make these drivers work in concert to achieve the RET dissemination objective.

### **IV. FOCUS AREAS**

The EGM will attempt to identify the drivers to establishing a sustainable rural energy market and the challenges facing rural communities in the creation of such a market. It will cover the following topics:

- 1. RURAL LIVELIHOOD – SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF RURAL AREAS**
- 2. ENERGY FOR IMPROVING RURAL LIVELIHOOD - CONSTRUCTING ENERGY INVESTMENT POLICIES SPECIFIC FOR RURAL REGIONS - GLOBAL AND REGIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND INSTITUTIONAL MODELS**
- 3. FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL & NATIONAL)**
- 4. MICRO FINANCE INSTITUTIONS**
- 5. INSTILLING ENERGY ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITHIN THE RURAL COMMUNITY - ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING ASSESSMENT NEEDS**

### **V. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING**

The UN ESCWA meeting is organized and implemented by the Sustainable Development Policies Division (SDPD).

### **VI. PARTICIPANTS**

The participants to the EGM will include energy experts, green technology specialists, rural development practitioners, energy policy developers, among others. The experts are representatives of the public and private sectors in the region, financial institutions, civil society organizations and other UN organizations.

## VII. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

*Date and venue:* The EGM will be held on 18-19 April 2016 in Beirut, Lebanon.

*Language:* English is the language of the meeting.

*Accommodation and transportation:* information will be duly provided.

## VIII. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence and inquiries concerning the expert group meeting should be addressed to:

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