



Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDPD/2019/WG.21/INF.1  
27 May 2019  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

---

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

Expert Group Meeting on “Enhancing capacity building addressing Water and Energy interlinkages for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region”

UN-House, Beirut, Lebanon, 25-26 June 2019

### Information note

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) are jointly organizing an Expert Group Meeting on “Enhancing capacity building addressing Water and Energy interlinkages for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region” with support from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund in the margins of ESCWA’s Committees on Energy and Water Resources. The meeting will be held in Beirut, Lebanon on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at the UN – House.

#### 1. BACKGROUND

In September 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 related targets. The 2030 Agenda states that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible. Understanding the interlinkages and interdependencies across the goals is thus of crucial importance in ensuring that progress is achieved on the new Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes fully dedicated SDGs on water (SDG6) and on energy (SDG7), recognizing the importance of these two critical factors in advancing sustainable development and poverty eradication. As experts all over the world continue to advance global goals and targets on energy and water, it is becoming more evident that there is a need to address many relevant issues related to these factors in an integrated and holistic manner, taking into consideration the strong links that exist between water and energy. Energy is essential for most processes related to extraction, treatment and distribution of water. Water is indispensable for most systems related to the production, distribution and use of energy. Without integrated sustainable water and energy programmes and systems, many synergies supporting poverty eradication cannot be realized.

Evident policy and operational linkages exist between the SDG 6 targets focused on ensuring water and sanitation for all and the SDG 7 targets aiming to ensure access to energy for all. These are magnified when climate change considerations (articulated in SDG 13) and food security objectives (detailed in SDG 2) are considered within an integrated sustainable development context. Examining the SDGs as a system with a nexus lens helps identify these connections, and guide decision makers along the long-term path of sustainable development.

The water-energy-food security nexus framework is particularly suited to the Arab region given the stressors, constraints and strong interdependencies between sectors. In terms of water security, Arab States are among the most water scarce in the world. There are also nearly 55 million people in the Arab region without access to an improved drinking water source, and nearly 66 million people without access to improved sanitation. Furthermore, while over 56 per cent of the Arab region's population now lives in cities, water for agriculture remains a priority to ensure food security and maintain rural livelihoods in the region's middle- and low- income countries, which is significant as the agricultural sector continues to consume nearly 80 per cent of the region's freshwater resources. Not least, energy consumption in the Arab region more than doubled since the 1990. This has serious implications on energy security and economic growth rates in the region. Rural electrification also remains a challenge in certain parts of the Arab region, together with electricity service intermittency and dependency on fuel imports, which, in turn, affect the ability to deliver reliable water services and ensure food safety in appropriate food storage and processing facilities<sup>1</sup>.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) also, through its committee on energy and committee on water, completed a Project "Developing the Capacities of ESCWA Member Countries to Address the Water and Energy Nexus for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals"<sup>2</sup> (2014-2017) and developed among its outcomes a Policy Toolkit as well as three Operatively Toolkits on resources efficiency, renewable energy and transfer of technology<sup>3</sup>. This work allowed as well to conduct three feasibility studies to three pilot projects which were selected by ESCWA and implemented.

It is in this context that UNESCWA and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), will organize this Expert Group Meeting on "Enhancing capacity building addressing Water and Energy interlinkages for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region", to take place in the margins of ESCWA's Committees on Energy and Water Resources. Building on the results of UNESCWA's expertise and completed projects and ongoing activities in addressing the interlinkage between Water and Energy for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals, the programme will include discussion panels on policy, resource efficiency, technology and interlinkages with other SDGs through South-South cooperation. Leveraging interlinkages among SDGs, the Meeting will also serve as a regional launching platform for the 2019 SDG7 Policy Brief on "Achieving SDG7 in the Arab Region", to be developed by the Technical Advisory Group on SDG7<sup>4</sup>.

The Meeting will feature presentations which illustrate benefits of a nexus approach. Speakers will discuss policy, implementation and positives experiences stemming from the use of a nexus perspective. Additionally, they will discuss will the role that a nexus perspective can play in furthering progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals including, but not limited to, clean energy and water, gender equality, the reduction of poverty and hunger, economic growth, and good health.

Outcomes of the meeting aim to contribute to promoting South-South cooperation at global water and energy deliberations at major intergovernmental processes, including the upcoming review of SDG13 (climate

---

(1) ESCWA Water Development Report: The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region

(2) <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/water-energy-nexus-regional-policy-toolkit>

(3) UNESCWA (2016) *Developing the Capacity of ESCWA Member Countries to Address the Water and Energy Nexus for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals* (renewable-energy module)

(4) <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/energy/adhocgroupgoal7>

action) at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum, the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP25), the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Meeting is to strengthen the capacity of ESCWA member countries and other relevant stakeholders in terms of enhancing their ability to achieve an integrated and sustainable management of water and energy resources through South-South cooperation, thereby contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It intends to facilitate exchange of lessons, insights and experiences to-date among Member States and all stakeholders and to consider challenges and opportunities for furthering progress towards 2030. More specific objectives include:

- ***To assess progress on the water-energy nexus in the Arab Region within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Climate actions;***
- ***To discuss institutional mechanisms and integrated approaches for pursuing policy coherence towards ensuring water and energy security at the regional and national levels;***
- ***To demonstrate action and share key messages from national and international experiences in implementing water and energy interlinkages for sustainable development;***
- ***To launch the Arab Regional Network for Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions***
- ***To launch the 2019 Policy Brief on “Achieving SDG7 in the Arab Region”*** at regional level;
- ***To prepare substantive input in the lead-up*** to major intergovernmental processes related to energy on actions undertaken, lessons learned, opportunities for further acceleration and the way forward to meet the global agendas.

## 3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This meeting is expected to result in:

- Enhanced knowledge on the gaps and opportunities to advance integrated approaches to managing SDG6 and SDG7 and their interlinkages, based on lessons and experiences on the ground;
- A policy-relevant summary reflecting the highlights of discussions;
- A set of case studies on best practices and lessons learnt for addressing the linkages between water and energy, which will help inform the review of SDG13 at the upcoming High-Level Political Forum.

All Participants of this meeting will be invited to identify a possible policy tool or instrument that can be applied to support the mainstreaming of water-energy interlinkages at the national level. Interested ESCWA Member countries will be invited to prepare case studies on how they manage the water-energy interlinkages at national level, to be shared within the Global Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions Network.

It is expected that the discussions will help inform on-going and future deliberations on relevant issues at the High-Level Political Forum, the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, the UNFCCC conference of parties, and the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the Arab Region.

#### 4. VENUE

The Meeting will be held at the UN-House ESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon, co-organised by the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) and the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of UN DESA and hosted by the UNESCWA. The meeting will be held at UNESCWA Headquarters.

#### 5. TIMING AND DURATION

The Meeting will take place on 25-26 June 2019. It will consist of plenary and breakout sessions.

#### 6. PARTICIPANTS

The Meeting will bring together ESCWA Water Resources and Energy Committees' Member States, international organisations, international and regional energy and water experts, private sector, financial and Technology/Research institutions and other stakeholders. About 50 participants are expected.

#### 7. CORRESPONDENCE

Inquiries and completed registration forms should be submitted to the following officials:

**Ms. Radia Sedaoui**  
Chief, Energy Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel: + 961-1-978-527  
Fax: + 961-1-981-510  
E-mail: [sedaoui@un.org](mailto:sedaoui@un.org)

**Ms. Nadine Salameh**  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations Secretariat,  
UNDESA  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: +1-917-367-5330  
E-mail: [salame1@un.org](mailto:salame1@un.org)

**Ms. Noha Ziade**  
Administrative Assistant, Energy Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel: + 961-1-978-530  
E-mail: [ziaden@un.org](mailto:ziaden@un.org)