

Session 4: 2014 Briefing Note for the 20th RCM

Thematic Working Group on Climate Change

Chair: UNEP

*The United Nations Environment Programme - Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) has the honor to present to the 20th session of the RCM the progress report on the climate change thematic working group (CC TWG) for its consideration on a **decision to announce the completion of the work of the Group**. This note is divided into two sections (I) to provide summary update and recommendation from UNEP as the convener of the TWG and section (II) recalling the background of the TWG, achievements, issues and tracks of the recommendations from the RCM. The revised TOR is provided in Annex 1.*

I. Summary Update and Recommendations

1. The TWG witnessed progressive achievements during the first *three years* of operations (2008-2011). This has been largely driven by a strong UN and LAS agenda on climate change at the HQs and regional levels. For example, the TWG had to work together to fulfill the anticipated accelerated support to countries of the region in preparation to Copenhagen Conference in 2009. Climate Change was selected as the theme for UN-LAS Sectoral Coordination Meeting held in June 2009 in which priorities for joint work was agreed.

The following are additional results achieved by the TWG:

- a) Launching of the Regional Cooperation for Climate Change Impact Assessment on Water Resources in the Arab Region (RICCAR). This has been the flagship of the TWG with six agencies participating (ESCWA, WMO, UNEP, UNU, UN ISDR, WHO) ESCWA is the lead agency. The RICCAR has mobilized technical and financial resources in support of conducting the assessment itself and building the capacities in the Arab Region. With a US \$4 M donated by SIDA, the RICCAR is advancing very well towards preparing comprehensive assessment of climate change impacts on water resources. A number of capacity building activities have been implemented. A new sub-Group on Methodology for Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation headed by UNEP was established in 2012.
- b) The TWG supported collectively the preparation of the Arab Action Plan on Climate Change approved by CAMRE in 2012.
- c) The TWG held a side event in Doha Climate Conference, COP18 in December 2012.
- d) Presentations of the TWG were made to global and regional workshops and events. It also contributed to other TWGs (Food Security and MDGs)
- e) The TWG held Annual meetings in which common issues were discussed, information exchanged and joint plans were made.

2. UNEP believes that the TWG and UNEP as a convener fulfilled their mandate within the context of its original establishment, i.e triggering and demonstrating inter-agency collaboration and supporting the UN SG Climate Team at that time as shown above.

3 UNEP recommends the successful closure of the TWG work.

4. If further interest from the RCM members exists, the interested organizations would need to refocus its objectives and take the lead as per the previously revised TOR prepared by UNEP (Annex 1) and shared with all agencies after the 19th meeting of the RCM where only UNDP and IOM supported and responded.

II. Background Note on the Climate Change Thematic Working Group (TWG)

Members (original): ESCWA, UNESCO, FAO, UNDP, UNU, WHO, UNIDO, WMO, UN-HABITAT, UN ISDR, the World Bank and the League of Arab States

Introduction

The UN Thematic Working Group on Climate Change (TWG) was established pursuant to the decision of the 12th Session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism which met in ESCWA, Beirut, 13-14 September 2008. The Group has also been established within the context of a broader global UN cooperation mechanism under the CEB-HLCP framework as called for by the UN Secretary General. The UNEP Regional Office for West Asia was tasked to facilitate and be the convener of the Thematic Working Group (TWG). According to its agreed TOR and Work Plan, the objective of the TWG is to strengthen *results* and enhance *impacts* of the UN system operations to support the Arab Region in addressing climate change issues through effective networking and sharing of information and output-oriented collaboration efforts among partner UN agencies in the region. The Group will be a forum for planning joint activities whenever feasible and for the provision of coherent advice and capacity building support to countries on a regional level. In doing so, the Group will seek to identify priority issues and actions on climate change that need to be supported on a regional scale. Over the operation of the TWG since 2008, representatives from ESCWA, UNESCO, FAO, UNDP, UNU, WHO, UNIDO, WMO, UN-HABITAT, UN ISDR, the World Bank and the League of Arab States as an observer have attended one or more of the Group meetings.

What has worked?

1. As stated above the strong drive from the HQs of agencies in 2008 & 2009 made the TWG more active and responsive to the needs of the RCM and the Region. This created visibility at the global level of what the agencies are doing in the region

2. The Group worked well within the framework of a well funded project (the RICCAR project). Funds have been made available for joint work although not necessary that funds transited agencies

accounts. ESCWA has been the Fund Manager and the Coordinator for the Initiative but agencies were willing to participate upon coverage of their costs from the project.

3. LAS provided a good political umbrella through being an observer and through the Arab Climate Change Action Plan preparation
4. TWG meetings always took the advantage of gathering of agencies' representatives in attending the RCM or/and the Expert Group Meeting of the RICCAR
5. Regular reports and presentations submitted to RCM meetings.

What did not work and why

1. The time given for the face-to-face meetings of the TWG was never enough to go through the agenda items. Meetings were usually held back to back with other meetings to save costs.
2. Turn-over of focal points or representatives from agencies hindered consistency and progressive achievements of the Group.
3. Focal points may not have the adequate mandate or authority to agree on priorities or programming aspects
4. Support from agencies' HQs has faded by time.
5. More often agencies, if they have the resources and the abilities to implement an activity or project they do so on their own.
6. Agencies are still in the competing mode especially when opportunity for funding arise
7. Follow up, coordination and information sharing requires dedicated staff time from the Lead and Participating Agencies.

Annex I - Thematic Working Group on Climate Change in the Arab Region

Revised TOR – draft 13 February 2014

Prepared by UNEP as the Convener of the TWG

Introduction

The Thematic Working Group on Climate Change for the Arab Region (TWG CC) was established under the auspices of the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) in 2008. The purpose of the TWG is to provide a more coordinated and strategic support to Arab region in addressing climate change agenda. National climate change studies and reports indicate that the Arab region is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change but also have opportunities to contribute to climate change mitigation through utilization of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency gains.

To enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the TWG, the 19th RCM meeting held in Cairo on 26 November 2014 recommended that:

- (a) All TWGs will prepare clear Annual Work Plans linked to deliverables and a timeline for implementation to be pre-approved by members. Updates by RCM TWGs should also be shared well ahead of time of the next meeting.
- (b) The Terms of Reference (TORs) and scope of the TWG on Climate Change should be reformulated with a narrower focus and rotational leadership of the group by different agencies. UNEP will organize consultations early in 2014.

This revised TOR is in response to the above RCM recommendations

Why do we need the TWG

Each UN agency has its individual programme of support on climate change to countries and on regional scale. Examples at the national level include support to climate change reporting, impacts and vulnerability assessments, adaptation projects in priority sectors, projects to enhance energy efficiency, renewable energy and technology transfer. As the Arab Climate Change Action Plan indicated there are priorities that are common to the Arab region and can be better addressed at the Regional Level. The TWG on Climate Change should focus on responding to those common priority issues. One example that has worked so far is the joint project on "The Regional Initiative on the Assessment of Impacts and Vulnerabilities of Water Resources in the Arab Region"

Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed in Durban and Doha to have a new climate change agreement by 2015. This new agreement will be applicable to all Parties, developed and developing, and will enter into force by 2020. The road to Paris (COP21 in 2015) put considerable demand on Arab countries to negotiate and be ready. Increased level of technical support from the UN agencies is anticipated in the upcoming five years or so. In addition, the UN SG is calling for a Climate Summit in September 2014. Therefore, the TWG is a valuable instrument to deliver the support need to the Arab region during this intense period of global climate change agenda setting.

What is the ultimate goal of the TWG

The TWG on Climate Change works towards bringing the climate change concerns relevant to the Arab region to the regional and national development agendas and fora. Although considerable increase in the portfolio of activities in the Arab countries and the League of Arab States is witnessed, climate change is not yet fully integrated into the mainstream of the overall national and regional development policy and the sectoral plans and national budgets. The UN TWG could play a major role in enhancing awareness of climate change issues at the policy and strategic level.

What are the functions of the TWG

The TWG will mainly play as an inter-agency platform for strategizing, joint planning and coordination of support to countries and the region. It will report to the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and be guided by LAS, country priorities and the agency's mandate.

What could be the tangible deliverables of the TWG

Human and financial resources are not currently available to agencies to invest in large scale initiatives nor on complex coordination and planning exercises. Instead, the TWG should focus on limited number of deliverables that are less resource intensive and can be accomplished within the limited time and resources of the agencies. The Arab Climate Change Action Plan and issues discussed within the Durban Platform (ADP) can serve as a starting point.

Example of Deliverables:

1. Preparing Cooperative Support Programme to respond to the Arab Climate Change Action Plan in light of the negotiations towards new climate agreement in 2015.
2. Position Paper and Policy Recommendations for Arab Region on the new climate regime
3. Climate Change Indicators for the Arab Region in preparation for the SDGs
4. Arab Young Climate Negotiators Capacity Building Programme
5. Establishing Climate Advisory Network (virtual)
6. Regional Training Workshops on Technology and Finance

Cooperation Mechanism

The TWG will be open to all UN agencies active on climate change issues in the region. The LAS and regional organizations will be invited to the TWG meetings as observers and contributors. To reduce costs of running the TWG, face-to-face meetings will be arranged back to back with regional events which attract representatives from participating agencies. Examples of such meetings include the West Asia Regional Network for Climate Change West Asia (WARN-CC), LAS Climate Change Sub-Committee, Regional Expert Group on the Regional Initiative (RICCAR).

Each agency will appoint a focal point who will be responsible for coordinating with the TWG. Each agency will cover the cost of its participation.

Role of the Convener

- Prepare draft annual work plans and report to the RCM
- Call for TWG meetings
- Compile inputs from TWG members and prepare reports according to agreed plans

Role of TWG Members

- Share information on programmes, projects and plans
- Contribute to TWG events and reports
- Propose ideas for projects, activities and initiatives
- Promote the collective work of the TWG and integrate into the broader agency programme of work and networks
- Lead activities in line with agency's mandate and capabilities

Tentative Annual Work Plan and Deliverables

The work plan below is suggested by the Convener Agency (UNEP) for 2014. More details on the deliverables below will be inserted once a short listing of “priority” deliverables is done by the agencies.

Deliverables 2014	Activities	Timeline 2014	Responsibilities
1. Approved TOR, Work Plan and Agree on Priority Deliverables for 2014 & 2015	Circulate draft TOR & AWP to members Face-to-face meeting of the TWG	Feb-March	UNEP
1. Preparing Cooperative Support Programme to respond to the Arab Climate Change Action Plan in light of the negotiations towards new climate agreement in 2015.			
2. Position Paper and Policy Recommendations for Arab Region on the new climate regime			
3. Climate Change Indicators for the Arab Region in preparation for the SDGs			
4. Arab Young Climate Negotiators Programme			
5. Establishing Climate Advisory Network (virtual)			
6. Regional Training Workshops on Technology and Finance			