



22nd Conference of the Parties to the
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate
Change

**SDG17: Building capacity for advancing the 2030
Agenda through climate action and reviewing
progress on achieving the climate related SDGs:
integrated solutions for regional implementation**

15 November 2016, 13:15-14:45
Austral Room – Blue Zone, Bab Ighli, Marrakech,
Morocco

Statement of Ms. Rima Khalaf

Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for
Western Asia (ESCWA)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Arab Governments are strongly committed to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and they do realize the need to ensure its coherence with the 2030 Agenda and the other major global processes.

Arab countries are experiencing firsthand the repercussions of climate change on their development and human security. They have seen how climate change and weather-related disasters are increasing water scarcity, affecting food security, damaging coastal zones,

impacting infrastructure and affecting the health, land and livelihoods of vulnerable people.

They are determined to combat it and have started integrating adaptation and mitigation measures into their development agendas.

Despite such a commitment, the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda will be affected by three main factors: regional instability, the implementation of global commitments, and national capacities to deliver on climate action.

The Arab region has become one of the most turbulent and conflict ridden in the world. In the

past 5 years, over 40% of Arab countries have witnessed one form or another of armed conflict. In addition to death and destruction, these conflicts have unleashed the largest wave of forced displacement since the Second World War. More than half the world's refugees today come from our region. Development indicators in conflict countries have regressed to their levels of forty years ago.

In such countries, climate action will not feature high in strategies, as priorities are re-arranged to address immediate threats to people's lives. Our region also suffers from the destructive effects of the longest occupation in post-colonial times, the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda will be difficult to achieve where Palestinians have little control over their natural resources, or their lives for that matter, and where they continue to be subjected to Israeli violence, blockades, aerial bombardment, and destruction of homes, property, agricultural lands and water installations.

The second challenge relates to the implementation of global commitments. Nineteen out of 22 Arab countries have submitted their NDCs, which focus largely on adaptation measures related to water, agriculture

and health, but also include a suite of mitigation initiatives.

These commitments are premised on what has been clear since Durban. An ambitious climate change agenda cannot be achieved unless there is appropriate technology transfer, targeted capacity building and sufficient financing accessible to developing countries.

If those global commitments do not come through, then implementation in the region and beyond will be put at risk.

Finally, our countries like many others, will face technical difficulties in the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Key challenges include lack of data, inadequate technical tools,

insufficient financial resources, and weak institutional capabilities.

ESCWA has recently conducted a preliminary assessment of data available for monitoring the 17 SDGs. Findings reveal major data gaps in 12 goals, such as those related to poverty, inequality, innovation and infrastructure, and significant problems related to data disaggregation.

Hence a major focus of our programme is to build the capacity of national statistical offices to help them collect new statistics and improve the quality of the data produce.

ESCWA is also supporting its member States in aligning and integrating the 2030 Agenda into their national development plans, fiscal frameworks and sector strategies.

We are also working with them to ensure coherence in planning, monitoring and reporting on the climate-related SDGs.

At the regional level, we have supported the production of common Arab strategies on water, sustainable energy, food security, climate change, and disaster risk reduction. Given the scarcity of water across the region, ESCWA's monitoring of water indicators precedes the SDGs.

Based on a mandate from Arab States to regionalize the water-related MDG target, we launched in 2010 the MDG+ Initiative.

It yielded a set of region-specific indicators, the establishment of an inter-governmental reporting mechanism, and the formation of national monitoring teams that issue annual reports on water accessibility, affordability and quality.

ESCWA is supporting country and regional processes through a conceptual framework based on the nexus approach that analyses interlinkages between different sectors and development goals. Our work on the water, energy and food security nexus is the most relevant to climate action. This

is supporting integrated planning, policy-making and institutional coordination.

This approach combines quantitative and qualitative assessments to identify trade-offs and win-win interventions.

Distinguished participants,

To assist our member States implement an integrated 2030 Agenda, ESCWA is pursuing a comprehensive and mutually reinforcing package of normative, technical and capacity-building initiatives.

Through our knowledge products and technical assistance we aim to help our countries deliver on their commitments to the international

community and more importantly to their own peoples. But we know that many factors remain beyond their sphere of influence.

Not much can be achieved if foreign occupations are not brought to an end and if conflicts are not speedily resolved in a just and equitable manner.

And not much can be achieved if the most powerful and the most polluting renege on commitments they made to save the planet and humanity from an impending disaster.

Thank you.