

**Seventeenth Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for
Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries**
Kuwait City, Kuwait, 13 May 2024

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Opening Remarks

Your Excellency Jamal Essa Al-Loughani, Secretary General of Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC),

Mr. Albara Tawfiq, Chair of the Arab Group on Climate Change and Advisor at the Ministry of Energy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

Mr. Tarek Alkhoury Regional Coordinator for Climate Action at United Nations Environment Programme/ Regional Office for West Asia,

Mr. Mahmoud Fathallah, Director of the Department of Environmental and Meteorological Affairs at the League of Arab States,

Esteemed Participants and Colleagues,

Sabah El Nour

On behalf of ESCWA, I am pleased to welcome you to this Seventeenth Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for Arab Countries, jointly organized with UNEP and the League of Arab States.

This workshop is generously hosted by OAPEC, which welcomed us for our sixteenth workshop in these beautiful halls last year. OAPEC is also kindly hosting a concurrent workshop that ESCWA organizing for the Kuwait Diplomatic Corps at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, and which started yesterday and extends through the end of the week.

This is why we have with us a cohort of additional, eager faces looking forward to learn from our discussions, and we welcome their engagement over the coming days.

Distinguished colleagues,

The past two years have witnessed high levels of engagement at COP 27 hosted by Egypt and COP 28 hosted by the United Arab Emirates. The negotiations culminated in significant outcomes and decisions



related to the first global stocktake, pursuit of a just and equitable sustainable energy transition, operationalizing the global goal on adaptation, and setting up the new Loss and Damage Fund.

The next two years will be pivotal as the first biennial transparency reports (BTRs) are due by the end of this year and the next round of National Determined Contributions are due in early 2025. Seventeen Arab States have already submitted their first or updated NDC, with Oman and UAE already submitting their second NDC.

It is strongly encouraged to use the current NDC preparation cycle not only to strengthen collective ambition towards the global climate goal, but also to align national ambition with your national development goals.

We kindly recognize the impressive efforts made to date, as we have witnessed a marked improvement in inter-ministerial elaboration on targets articulated in NDCs in our region. However, more can be done to elaborate commitments through the inclusion of defined project lists with costed financial needs – not only for mitigation but also for adaptation to help funnel resources towards priority investments and sector needs.

In this respect, we are pleased to have the UNFCCC also with us here today and they are able to advise you formally, and on the sidelines of our sessions, on what NDC support you can access at the country-level, and also on the content anticipated for inclusion in this new cycle of NDCs, which will set the stage for negotiations at COP 30 in Brazil.

Dear Colleagues,

We are witnessing climate change becoming more intense and disruptive in the region, including most recently with the flash floods in Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Somalia – and major flood events also being witnessed this week in Kenya and Brazil. This is a growing phenomenon resulting in the loss of human lives and damage to cities, land and livelihoods.

In tandem, sand and dust storms are impacting our health, transport and agricultural sectors. Groundwater is being depleted, surface waters are being diverted to meet agricultural and energy needs, and food systems are fragmenting. Over 83 per cent of the Arab population is facing high or critical levels of water stress.

Climate change is making things worse.

Meanwhile, debt is increasing reaching over \$1.4 trillion dollars in the Arab region, alongside destructive war and conflict, which are shrinking the financial and political capital needed to accelerate climate action.

This requires us to raise the alert and strengthen climate resilience.

Advancing ambition on mitigation and investing in adaptation are our *first lines* of defence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ESCWA, through its Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, stands ready to continue to support you through targeted training and technical assistance, regional knowledge and data hubs, evidence-based products, innovative financial initiatives and taxonomies, and high-resolution regional climate projections and assessments to accelerate climate action.

Indeed, I am pleased to announce that with the support of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and our Swedish Government partners, ESCWA will produce RICCAR country reports for every Arab State, and we look forward to discussing the regional climate projections that will be presented in those reports with you and your national counterparts this year.

In closing, I am delighted to recognize and warmly welcome the kind offer of Tunisia to host our next regional workshop this Fall before COP 29 in Azerbaijan, where focus will be placed on climate finance.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge another important Conference of the Parties session that will be convened this December in Saudi Arabia, which will host the 16th COP of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and include negotiations on climate change challenges facing our land and water resources.

Finally, I would like to thank again His Excellency Jamal Essa Al-Loughani, his team and OAPEC for their generous hospitality, and to thank our partners at the League of Arab States, UNEP and the Arab Group for their collaboration in organizing this workshop.

This workshop marks the start of our second decade organizing regional climate negotiations workshops for Arab States, and for those efforts I would also like to not only recognize our regional partners, but also my team, Tarek and Zoubeida and colleagues back at ESCWA, their dedication and support.

I wish you fruitful discussions and a pleasant stay in Kuwait.

Thank you.