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Press Release

Second regional Steering Committee convened on the “Resilient Water Solutions Against Climate Change in Jordan and Lebanon” project

UN-Habitat, in partnership with ESCWA and UNICEF gather Jordanian and Lebanese Ministers of Environment with local authorities and project partners to discuss the regional context of water-related climate adaptation measures in Jordan and Lebanon.

Beirut, 3-4 October 2023 – In the context of the “Resilient Water Solutions Against Climate Change in Jordan and Lebanon” project, led by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and national executing entities, the second Regional Steering Committee meeting in Jordan was held on 3 October, followed by visits to project sites on 4 October 2023.

Chaired by the Jordanian Minister of Environment Dr. Muawieh Khalid Radaideh and Lebanese Minister of Environment Dr. Nasser Yassin, the Committee meeting gathered the project’s national coordinators, local authorities, project partners and other relevant stakeholders. The Committee discussed project progress, milestones, challenges, and solutions, and operationalized a concrete platform for critical regional learning in both countries towards climate change adaptation solutions.

The meeting provided critical insight into the areas where regional exchange is mostly needed, with a focus on the two countries, and concluded with measures to further enhance the transfer of knowledge and experiences gained through project implementation. It also concluded with concrete entry points to promote the upscaling, replication and sustainability of the project, and served as a practical learning experience between Lebanese and Jordanian officials while visiting two wastewater treatment and reuse projects in Mafraq and Me’rad, a permaculture site at Jerash University, and the Urban Observatory of Greater Amman Municipality.

In his remarks, Radiadeh highlighted climate impacts on Jordan. “The climate-related challenges facing the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan are significant... rainfall rates have decreased by almost half over the past fifty years, while the share of water per capita has decreased by nearly 80%.

Over the years, it has also become clear that climate change would impact various development sectors, including water, agriculture, urban areas, health, and society as a whole,” said Radaideh. “This meeting comes within the context of ensuring the effective implementation of the project, discussing the progression of project activities and benefiting from the diverse experiences in both countries, and working collaboratively to achieve the project’s objectives.”

Meanwhile, Yassin emphasized the importance of regional collaboration to adapt to climate change and stressed the importance of international funding. “Joint efforts amongst Arab states to combat climate change and its implications on the water sector are of utmost importance. There is a need to promote and adopt innovative measures in different sectors such as water, agriculture, management of forests and natural reserves,” said Yassin. “There is an unfulfilled commitment of industrial countries to fund adaptation projects in underdeveloped countries, where pledges committed during different climate summits have not reached 6% of the total commitments,” he added.

UN-Habitat Regional Representative (a.i.) for Arab States Rania Hedaya highlighted water scarcity amid displacement and increased urbanization in the Levant. “Water scarcity is one of the most pressing current issues causing concern for the future of our region. In addition to the effects of climate change, the Arab region is witnessing rapid urbanization accompanied by a large influx of refugees due to the spread of conflicts in the region. As our cities expand, this project’s interventions strive to address the complex interaction between urban growth, migration and climate change in both Jordan and Lebanon,” she said.

“For Jordan and Lebanon, climate change is exacerbating vulnerability in rural and urban communities and in formal and informal communities alike,” said Director of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies Cluster at ESCWA Ms. Carol Chouchani Cherfane. “This requires effective solutions that advance climate adaptation,” she stressed. “Your efforts identifying, testing and pursuing these solutions on the ground can be shared with others in the region and around the world.”

The project provides replicable and innovative measures to promote climate change resilience and adaptation in the Arab region, with a focus on promoting climate change and gender mainstreamed urban planning in areas facing extreme weather events, namely governorates of Mafraq and Irbid in Jordan and Zahle district in Lebanon.

Financed by the Adaptation Fund, the project works on enabling local communities to adapt to increasing temperatures and declining precipitation levels that mostly lead to droughts, in addition to the varying rainfall patterns, which negatively affect agriculture. Finally, the project focuses on the sustainable management and use of water resources through promoting water-efficient irrigation methods and permaculture, in addition to using non-conventional water sources, such as treated wastewater and harvested rainwater.

To promote regional knowledge exchange, the project also recently launched the virtual Community of Practice (CoP) “Urban Water and Climate Resilience in the Arab Region,” a

platform that brings experts and practitioners together to discuss water-related climate change impacts on cities hosting displaced communities, including discussions around urban adaptation solutions.

About the “Resilient Water Solutions Against Climate Change in Jordan and Lebanon” project

The "Resilient water solutions against climate change in Jordan and Lebanon" project is funded by the Adaptation Fund and implemented by UN-Habitat in partnership with ESCWA and UNICEF in Lebanon and national executing partners in the targeted countries. The project aims to increase the resilience of communities to climate change-related water challenges in Lebanon and Jordan.

About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries supporting people in cities and human settlements for a better urban future. Working with governments and local partners, its high impact projects combine world-class expertise and local knowledge to deliver timely and targeted solutions. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a dedicated Goal on cities, SDG 11 – to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. For more information, visit <https://unhabitat.org/> Or follow us on Twitter @UNHabitat_Ar and Facebook @UNHABITAT.Arabic

About ESCWA

One of five United Nations regional commissions, ESCWA supports inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Arab States and works on enhancing regional integration.

About UNICEF

Working in Lebanon for over 70 years, UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF Lebanon and our work for children, visit www.unicef.org/lebanon/ or follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

For media inquiries:

Ms. Shahira Elbokhary, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States

T: +20 2 33380588

E: shahira.elbokhary@un.org

Ms. Lubna Elmahdy, UN-Habitat Lebanon

T: +961-76-615373

E: lubna.elmahdy1@un.org

Ms. Maryam Sleiman, ESCWA

M: +961-81-769888

E: sleiman2@un.org

Ms. Rania Harb, ESCWA

M: +961-70-008-879

E: harb1@un.org

Ms. Blanche Baz, UNICEF

M: +961-70190634

E: bbaz@unicef.org

Ms. Maya Outayek, UNICEF

M: +961-70190634

E: moutayek@unicef.org