

الأمم المتحدة
اللجنة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغربي آسيا

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for Western Asia



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**Statement of Ms. Rola Dashti,
Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary**

**2019 HLPF Review of SDG implementation:
SDG13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

**Friday, 12 July 2019
9:00 to 12:00
CR-4**

Excellencies,
Honorable delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yes, fossil fuels are an important component of the economy of some Arab States, but let us not forget that we are a *diverse* region, comprised of oil producing countries, middle income countries, States affected by conflict and occupation, and least developed countries that are *all vulnerable* to climate change. We are a region where:

- Droughts and land degradation are driving food insecurity and humanitarian crisis;
- Where flash floods are damaging homes and informal shelters from Iraq and Lebanon to Yemen and Sudan, and have taken the lives of people in cities and rural areas alike;
- Where climate impacts on water and agriculture will be most felt by women and vulnerable groups from the Moroccan and Mediterranean coasts to the Mashreq.

And where climate extremes are now normal events. I'm from Kuwait, so I would know. This spring, we had temperatures in the 50s. [Pause]. In Celsius, not Fahrenheit. [Pause] In fact, Kuwait recorded the third highest temperature ever, 54 Celsius. That is 129 degrees Fahrenheit.

Indeed, the increase in frequency and intensity of extreme climate events is being felt by countries served by **all five** UN Regional Commissions, and have been particularly severe in Southeast Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Western Europe in recent months.

The challenges are huge and the Arab States **are** taking action. The region is working to *diversify* its economy, *transition* to sustainable energy, *improve* energy productivity, and *invest* in renewable energy technologies. All Arab States have put in place renewable energy targets:

- Morocco committed to 52% by 2030;
- Egypt 42% by 2035;
- Oil producing states such as the Algeria, KSA, Qatar and UAE are committing to 20 to 30% within the next 20 years.

The world's largest single solar power plant, Noor Abu Dhabi, is already producing over 1100 megawatts.

Energy efficiency implementation instruments are also being set up, including specialized agencies and dedicated funds with private sector involvement. Moreover, clean energy is being pursued including through gas and carbon capture, utilization, and storage with ESCWA support.

Similar efforts are also being pursued by our sister Regional Commissions. Approximately 26% of the energy used in Latin America and the Caribbean is already coming from renewable sources and Chile has committed to phase out coal plants by 2040. The share of renewables in energy consumption in Europe and North America has also improved in recent years.

In the Arab region, we are also contributing to global efforts to *reduce* emissions, but let me be frank. [Small Pause] Adaptation is our priority.

- Jordan has become a global leader in treated wastewater reuse.
- Water harvesting schemes are proliferating throughout the region, alongside efforts that promote climate-smart agriculture.
- Morocco has heavily invested in combined solar power to electrify and to desalinate water.

UN-ECA, serving the Africa region, is also supporting its member States with climate action. As a result, some countries are expending up to 9% of their GDP on adaptation to manage climate risks. In Asia and the Pacific, climate champion networks have been created to stimulate innovative financing to support NDC implementation.

Your Excellencies,

The Paris Agreement calls for “*a balance between adaptation and mitigation, taking into account country-driven strategies, and the priorities and needs of developing country Parties*”. In the Arab Region, as in most developing country regions, we need adaptation and grant finance, especially for LDCs. Yet UNFCCC data shows that despite our regional priorities:

- Developed country bilateral support to Arab States for mitigation exceeds finance for adaptation by a factor of 5 to 1;
- Loans also exceed grants by 5 to 1; and
- Arab LDCs have received just 2% of bilateral climate finance flows to the Arab region.

Honourable Delegates,

Developing countries are facing impacts *today* based on the practices of the *past*. They have developed strategies to overcome climate challenges. Yet, to achieve them, developed countries need to honor their commitments to support nationally determined contributions based on national needs. With your partnership and support, my region and all regions will be able to take effective action towards sustainable future.

The Secretary General asked us to come with solutions, not speeches. Solutions require commitments and Arab States are already committed. They established the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies at ESCWA. Through our Center, we support Arab States to advance climate assessment, policy and action. We do so by championing integrated approaches to enhancing climate resilience that address transboundary waters, dust storms, transport and energy interconnections. But the region needs more support, and we need it at scale.

- *We need **bold political** commitments* that recognize both the *quantity and quality* of financial resources needed for developing countries in our region and elsewhere;

- We need **technical and financial support** to achieve NDC targets and **greater grant financing for adaptation**, particularly for LDCs and countries affected by conflict;
- We need **to stop double counting** development assistance and humanitarian aid as climate finance, and
- We need to strengthen **transparency of actions** and **action on commitments** by both developed and developing countries.

We invite each of you to join us and our sister Regional Commissions to harness and advance regional solutions to accelerate climate action that reflects national priorities and leaves no country behind.