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**Commission on Sustainable Development acting as  
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**THE ARAB DECLARATION TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT (WSSD)**

1. The Arab Ministers Responsible for Development, Planning and Environment, in their meeting held at the League of Arab States in Cairo, on 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2001 (8<sup>th</sup> of Shaaban 1422 Hijri) in preparation for the WSSD.
2. Recalling: relevant declarations especially the Stockholm Declaration of the UN summit on Human Environment (1971), the Rio Declaration of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992), the Barbados Declaration on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (1994), the Arab Declaration on Environment and Development (Tunisia, 1986) the Arab Statement on Environment and Development and the Future Outlook (1991), the Malmo Declaration on the occasion of the first Global Ministerial Environment Forum (2000), the Jeddah Declaration concerning the Islamic Perspective on the Environment (2000), the Tehran Declaration

concerning Religions, Cultures and Environment (2001), the Abu Dhabi Declaration: Perspective of Arab Environmental Action (2001).

3. Having discussed the Perspective Report on the Arab Environmental Programme, and the reports of the GEO, the Beirut Roundtable of Eminent persons, the NGOs, Industry, and Parliamentarians Forums, and the Bahrain Stakeholders Roundtable.

4. Renewing: their commitments to work with the international community within the framework of common but differentiated responsibility between developed and developing countries to achieve sustainable development.

5. Looking forward to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will assess the progress made towards the implementation of Agenda 21 in the past decade, and will provide another opportunity for the international community to develop a doable programme to achieve sustainable development by taking measures that will lead to the implementation of countries commitments and strengthening international cooperation in meeting global challenges.

6. Desirous of insuring effective participation at the Summit, a Joint Secretariat comprising of CAMRE Technical Secretariat, ESCWA and UNEP was established to coordinate regional preparations including roundtables and forums, in cooperation with governments, the civil society, and other regional and UN organizations. This is to review progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21, identifying constraints, challenges,

and future goals, drawing up strategies, platform for priority actions, and developing a framework and mechanism for international cooperation.

7. Emphasizing that achievements have been made towards sustainable development covering the economic, social and environmental areas with clear implications in the daily life of Arab Citizens in terms of health, education and economic conditions, including increase of per capita income, better health care and urban services, reduced illiteracy rates, increased women share in education and job opportunity, reduction in the population growth rate, increased life expectancy, strengthening of environmental and development institutions , issuing and upgrading legislation, improved capacity building, positive participation in the implementation of regional and international conventions and agreements, as well as the strengthening of regional cooperation in various fields, such as the establishment of the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone, transportation, gas and electricity networks, strengthening the Arab specialized councils and the role of civil society organizations.

8. Recognizing that the efforts to achieve sustainable development in the Arab Countries are facing major constraints, some will have impact for years to come. The main constrains include:

- Instability resulting from the lack of peace and security in the region and the inability of the world community to resolve the occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories on just and equitable bases and in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions

- Escalating poverty, illiteracy, high population growth rates, unemployment and the debt burden and increased debt servicing, as well as the continued unsustainable pattern of natural resources management.
- Continued population increase and the unbalanced distribution between rural and urban areas, spreading of slums around major cities, increased pressure on the natural resource base, as well as on the public utilities and services, air pollution, and solid waste accumulation.
- The severe arid nature of the region, with little and sparse rainfall, very high temperatures in the summer months with high evaporation and evapo-transpiration leading to frequent droughts and spread of desertification.
- Limited areas available for agriculture, water scarcity shortage of non-renewable sources of energy.
- The limited capacity of academic and research institutions and the inability to keep up with the advances in providing technologies for sustainable development.
- The relatively limited experience of the civil society in participating in the process of development and implementation of sustainable development programmes and activities.
- The adoption of technologies and approaches that are not suitable for the social, economic and environmental conditions of the region.
- The embargo inflicted on some of the Arab countries.

9. Realizing that there are also a large number of challenges and opportunities that could be utilized to achieve sustainable development including:

- 1- Combating poverty that represents a basic challenge to the efforts of achieving sustainable development in the Arab Region. This requires judicious utilization of available resources and the establishment of conducive environment for investment at the national and regional levels, a mechanism for achieving social security at the national level, in addition to establishing an integrated mechanism between the Arab countries, giving priority for employment Arab labor force.
- 2- Addressing the rapid increase in population in the Arab countries, which in spite of the observed reduction over the last 10 years still remains high. Giving greater emphasis on the education of women, strengthening of religion and social programmes, which will raise the level of awareness of the importance of family planning, childcare and the uncontrolled population increase.
- 3- Dealing with the increase in the young people component of the population as a positive indicator of human resource, raising the challenge of providing the suitable environment for their education, training and employment.
- 4- Curbing the increased immigration from rural to urban areas which should be giving priority in development planning such as when planning for development in the areas of infrastructures, health and education services to meet the needs of the rural areas and thus discourage immigration.
- 5- Sound management of the use of natural resources, especially water resources and energy that requires promoting of sustainable production and consumption, cooperation and integration between Arab countries towards the rational use of these resources and achieving Sustainable Development.

- 6- To set the foundations of the Arab common market and work towards the integration of national economies, which would create a Pan Arab market and provide strong support for the negotiations with other economic groupings, including the WTO.
- 7- Transfer, integration and ownership of modern technologies suitable for the economic, social and environmental conditions in member states. This also means assessment of new technologies before importing while insuring that any negative impact is mitigated before adopting in the region.
- 8- Maintenance and investing in the cultural and religions heritage that is unique to the Arab region towards achieving SD.
- 9- Dealing wisely with globalization and the impacts that may constraint achieving sustainable development in the Arab Region. The countries of the region are to adjust their economic and institutional arrangements to deal with globalization and to establish a regional economic block on the bases of the cultural and economic background to utilize the advantages that may be associated with globalization.
10. Accordingly, the Arab Ministers responsible for Development, Planning and Environment declare that:

## First

Achieving sustainable development requires the development of an integrated Pan Arab strategy that takes into account the historical and current conditions in the region and forecasts future changes and global developments with a view of achieving the following objectives:

- 1- The establishment of peace and security and abolishing foci of tension and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East on just bases.
- 2- Curtailing poverty and unemployment
- 3- Achieving balance between population growth rates and the available natural resources.
- 4- Eradicate illiteracy and enhance educational curricula and scientific research in accordance with the need to achieve sustainable development.
- 5- Supporting and further strengthening development and environment institutions, capacity building and environmental citizenship programmes.
- 6- Halting the degradation of natural resources and the environment and strive towards the sustainable management of these resources with a view of achieving water and food security, conservation of ecosystems and combating desertification.
- 7- Development and integration of Arab production sectors and the adoption of cleaner production procedures with a view of enhancing the

competitiveness of the Arab products in the world markets and increase preparedness for industrial and natural disasters.

- 8- Supporting the private sector and the civil society, giving special attention to the role of women, to insure their participation in the implementation of sustainable development.

## Second

Achieving Sustainable development requires setting of priorities of the joint Arab work programme as follows:

- 1- Strengthening cooperation with regional and global organizations and groupings, i.e. OIC countries and G77 and China, which creates a better chance for negotiations at global forums.
- 2- Implementation of integrated policies to eliminate poverty, most important of which is facilitating adjustment with economic reform policies, upgrading the level of general and vocational education, creation of job opportunities for citizens, conservation and judicious utilization of natural resources, enhancement of social security, identification of practical solutions for the national debt burden and strengthening of the role of the private sector and civil society in the formulation and implementation of sustainable development plans.

- 3- Development of a comprehensive and integrated population policy, and addressing the imbalance of population distribution between rural and urban areas.
- 4- Issuing of legislations and development and implementation of integrated policies at the national and regional levels and the periodic evaluation of their effectiveness. Raising awareness among all sectors of the society to take into consideration the limitation of resources in quantity and distribution when planning for development.
- 5- Applying an integrated approach for water resources management and the development of alternative water resources such as desalination and reuse of treated effluents, water harvesting, and use of schemes that reduce water losses.
- 6- Development of economic and environmental policies that take into account the conservation and development of non renewable energy, rationalize energy use, and mitigate the negative impacts on the environment and human health.
- 7- Giving greater attention to human development through applying policies that emphasize human health, child and mother care, caring for the elderly, people needing special care, to conserve the family institution.  
  
Developing and strengthen educational curricula at all levels, support scientific research and technology centers, and raise the level of public awareness and culture.

- 8- Exerting greater effort towards the integration between the strategies of health and environment, specially regarding the provision of safe drinking water and food, treatment of municipal waters and solid waste, controlling and reducing the risk associated with chemicals and pollution in all its forms, as well as genetically modified materials, and the establishment of nuclear safety in the Arab Region.
- 9- Encouraging investment and attracting capital to the Arab region taking into consideration the social economic and environmental objectives in preparing plans, policies and programmes for sustainable development and the reduction of negative impacts on human health and environment.
- 10- Upgrading legislations and encouraging intra-Arab trade and development of procedures for production and marketing of Arab products and protecting its rights in order to be able to compete in the world markets as small and medium enterprises.
- 11- Making tangible improvement in the institutional set up, infra-structure including transport and communication to facilitate the transfer of information, personnel and capital between member states, with the view of achieving integration and establishment of a true partnership between the private and public sectors.
- 12- Emphasizing the importance of joining MEA's in accordance with the interests of the Arab Region, and strengthening the regional cooperation on environmental protection, assist the Arab and developing countries in dealing with social and economic impacts of implementing policies and

programmes of the MEAs and compensating them in order not to strain their development programmes.

### Third

Achieving sustainable development within the context of globalization, international trade liberalization, the information technology revolution, and the strengthening cooperation between nations on the bases of dialogue and integrations of cultures requires more opportunities for developing countries and the agreement on a new mechanism for governance taking into consideration the principle of international law and people's rights in reaching sustainable development within the Rio declaration particularly through:

#### A. World Trade Organization

Negotiations at the WTO should work towards the objectives it was established for, i.e. opening the markets for exports without allowing obstacles that would limit developing countries ability to compete for these markets.

#### B. Informatics

The world community is urged to facilitate and provide information technology and advanced communication facilities which would enable developing countries to reduce their use of resources, transportation and

energy, and enable them to effectively follow up and implement the policies of sustainable development.

### C. Governance

1. Strengthening the role of the League of Arab States, and its organizations and ministerial councils related to sustainable development, and develop their working mechanisms in order to implement their strategies and programmes in an integrated manner.
2. Development of institutions in the Arab Region and support their activities at the national and regional levels in order to consolidate the various societal sectors with related government institutions to ensure proper planning, implementation of sustainable development programmes.
3. Strengthening partnership with civil society and private sector to widen the base for the decision-making process related to sustainable development.
4. Enhancement the role of the UN and its specialized agencies relevant to sustainable development and upgrading its working mechanisms with a view of enabling them to implement strategies and programmes of sustainable development in an integrated manner and urging them to strengthen cooperation with LAS and its specialized agencies.

D. Financial means of implementation at the regional level

1. Further develop Arab and Islamic funds to participate in financing sustainable development.
2. Give priority in funding allocation at the national level to sustainable development projects and improving environment conditions.
3. Focus on social security, support and catalyze non-governmental organizations to contribute to sustainable development.

E. Financial means of implementation at the International level

1. Developed countries to fulfill their commitment to the United Nations according to the Rio summit to increase its official assistance to the developing countries to be 0.7% of their GDP.
2. Augment GEF fund in accordance with the official level of financial assistance to developing countries, as an important mechanism to fund development and environment activities, assign additional financial assistance to the implementation of related Multilateral Agreements Programmes and give an equal and fair opportunity to all developing countries to benefit from GEF, and simplify funding procedures.
3. Encourage foreign direct investment to support national financing resources and efforts of the private sector to achieve sustainable development.

4. Strengthening the linkage between the secretariats of MEAs and specialized regional and international organizations in support of sustainable development programmes in developing countries.

F. Means of evaluation and monitoring

1. Establishment of means for monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development programmes and assess the degree of the harmonization and effectiveness in achieving the goals.
2. Development of harmonized indicators and criteria for monitoring and follow up on sustainable development in the Arab Region, and periodic assessment to readjust the course of development to ensure sustainability.