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**THEMATIC ROUNDTABLE FOR THE WESTERN ASIA REGION IN PREPARATION FOR
"RIO + 10" WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Beirut-Lebanon

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REPORT OF THE MEETING

**Environment Coordination Unit
ENRED**



**UNITED NATIONS
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for Western Asia**

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Note: Western Asia Region includes the following 13 countries only: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report portrays the wide gap currently separating between the requirements of sustainability and the reality of economic development politics in the Western Asia Region. Despite the facts that SD has become one of the basic commitments of the Western Asia Region since Rio 1992, much more remains to be done to transform the principle into daily practice. The report is a stock-taking, almost nine year after Rio, of what has been attempted and achieved in the Western Asia Region by national governments, regional and sub-regional bodies to implement the concepts of Sustainable Development (SD). The report also sets out the major issues that the roundtable believes prevent the attainment of coherent and strong SD policies in the Western Asia Region.

On the positive side, National & local agenda-21 (LA-21), National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS), cross-sectoral National Environmental Strategies (NES) and National Environmental Action Plans (NEAP) have been formulated in most of the Western Asia Region providing blueprints for action and setting time-bound goals and targets.

Since UNCED, 1992 there has also been a fast growing participation by the major groups through NGOs, civil societies, trade unions, and private sectors in the environmental decision-making process in the region.

On the institutional level, some countries of the Western Asia Region have made substantial progress in setting up for SD. Furthermore, national councils or co-ordinating bodies in the field of SD and NGOs are flourishing in some countries of the Western Asia Region.

A major positive development was the declaration of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE) in their meeting in Abu-Dhabi, UAE on 3rd of February 2001, that there is an urgent need for alleviation of poverty and improvement of living standards and economic conditions of the Arab citizen through programs of SD. This declaration including its associated commitments was later adopted at the Arab summit meeting in March 2001 in Amman giving the declaration the legitimacy and momentum for implementation at the regional level.

Unfortunately, the roundtable discussions revealed that most of the countries of the Western Asia Region are faced with inadequate technical, human and financial resources. The regional situation is further complicated by unfavourable international atmosphere. The main challenge facing most decision-makers in the Western Asia Region is how to effectively integrate multi-sectoral SD policies in a consolidated strategy. Despite all their efforts to avoid the prevailing piece-meal approach, governments in the Western Asia Region are still away from achieving inter-linkages, interdependencies, synergy and coherence in their policy initiatives and policies.

The roundtable was able to identify and sum-up four major obstacles, which impede the achievement of SD in the Western Asia Region, these are:

1. Inadequate freshwater supplies and poor land resources.
2. Lack of peace and security in the region.
3. Inadequate monitoring and access to credible information.
4. Inadequate public participation in decision-making led to ineffective governance for SD.

Freshwater supply in the Western Asia Region was found to be highly variable in time and space. The collection of hydrological, meteorological, ecological and socio-economic information for water resources management is still severely hindered at the field level by inadequate resources and financial constraints. Most countries of the region have developed water policies to manage water scarcity by devising programs based mostly on resources development and to a much lower extent on demand management.

The situation at the regional level is also aggravated by the social and cultural impact of globalisation on societies including uneven distribution of the benefits of development, rapid pace of technological change and the information revolution. Globalisation resulted into faster socio-economic growth, created new opportunities and consequently yielded higher living standards in most of the developed world. However, these benefits were unevenly distributed and the Western Asia Region was almost marginalized. The imbalance between the fast expanding global markets and the inadequate access to the market by countries of the Western Asia Region has hindered their beneficial integration in the world economy. There is a general feeling of suspicion among countries of the Western Asia Region that globalisation is a dubious concept that will signify increased social, economic and ecological

vulnerability. Some efforts are underway to formulate an Arabic Economic Alliance. The impact of these efforts remains to be seen.

In face of prevailing unemployment, poverty and weak infrastructures in some countries of the Western Asia Region, the roundtable expressed deep concern that there is a danger that SD could take a backseat and its priority reduced as the social & political pressures for accelerated economic development overwhelm governments. On the positive side, the age structure is in favour of all countries of the Western Asia Region where youth represent a relatively high percent of the societies.

At the regional level, the Western Asia Region have to assess their degree of success and/or failure in reconciling their economic and environmental agendas. Countries of the Western Asia Region should co-operatively be able to define the characteristics of modern SD governance tools & trends that reflect the practical lessons learned from our shared past experience. These should definitely include the need to carefully set priorities, pursue cost-effective solutions and seek synergy in policy reforms that result in environmental improvements while promoting socio-economic development.

I- BACKGROUND OF THE ROUNDTABLE

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) in its resolution 55/199 decided on the organization of a ten-year review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment & Development (UNCED) at a summit meeting called World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The summit is to be convened in Johannesburg, South Africa from 2 to 11 September 2002. The main objectives of the WSSD is to reinvigorate, at the highest political level, the global commitment to Sustainable Development (SD) by identifying accomplishments and areas where efforts are needed to implement Agenda 21 and other outcomes of UNCED, addressing new challenges and opportunities. This should result into a renewed political commitment and support for SD, consistent, inter-alia, with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

In this connection, the GA stressed on the importance of early and effective preparations for the summit to be carried out at the local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels by Governments and the UN system so as to ensure high-quality inputs to the review process. The GA underscored that the WSSD including its preparatory process, is to insure a balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection as there are interdependencies, linkages and synergies between them and they mutually reinforce SD.

Within this framework, the regional Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) / the Regional Office for Western Asia (ROWA), the Department of Economic & Social Affairs (DESA) in New York and the technical Secretariat for the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) at the League of Arab States (LAS) has convened an independent Eminent Persons Thematic Roundtable at the UN House in Beirut from 9 to 11 April 2001.

The objectives of this preparatory thematic roundtable is to undertake a regional assessment of progress made in attaining SD and to evaluate the main achievements in the Western Asia Region since UNCED in the implementation of Agenda 21. The roundtable also addressed the prospective outlooks and main constraints faced by the region in attaining SD, new initiatives and commitments towards overcoming constraints and fostering further progress. Also as a part of the regional preparatory meeting, the roundtable aimed at formulating a regional platform, which could outline key policy issues, priorities and follow up actions. Recommendations emanating from the roundtable are to be included in the meeting report, which will be made available for consideration in advance of the regional prepcoms.

In this context, the roundtable took stock primarily from the experience and views of a number of eminent persons and specialists from the region. Most of the eminent persons were independent experts and some representatives of major groups who are known in the region for possessing the necessary political wisdom and practical experiences in the field of SD and had been actively involved in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local, national and regional levels. The thematic roundtable is the first of a series of two roundtables to be held in the region. The second roundtable is a stakeholder meeting representing all major groups such as women, youth, NGOs, farmers, private

sector, academia, etc., involved in all aspects of development of the region. This stakeholder roundtable is planned to convene in Manama, Bahrain from 23 to 25 September 2001.

I-1- The Attendance :

The thematic roundtable was attended by a number of eminent persons from the region with experience in sustainable development and understanding of its associated international processes. Recognized experts in the selected environmental themes from the region also attended the meeting (Annex 1: List of Participants).

In addition to the collaborating partners (UNEP/ROWA, CAMRE, DESA & ESCWA), representatives of 9 United Nations specialized agencies and other Organizations in the United Nations system have attended the meeting, namely:

- The Economic commission for Africa (ECA),
- The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE),
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),
- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP),
- The UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP),
- The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO),
- United Nations University (UNU): The International Network on Water, Environment and Health (INWEH),
- The World Health Organization (WHO) Office in Lebanon
- The WHO Center for Environmental Health Activities (CEHA) in Amman, Jordan.

Out of 13 Member States in the region, delegates from 9 Countries, coming to attend a back-to-back Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), have also actively participated in the thematic roundtable discussions. This is in addition to participants from various institutions in the host country, Lebanon. They included participants from Lebanese academic institutions, national research centers, government and non-government organizations, the private sector and chamber of commerce.

Furthermore, representatives of national, regional and international organizations working in the region have also attended. The following organizations were included:

- Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Vienna, Austria,
- Arabian Gulf University (AGU),
- The Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), Damascus, Syria,
- Arab Planning Institute (API), Kuwait,
- The Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), Morocco,
- The Center for Environment & Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), Cairo, Egypt,
- Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia,
- The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Damascus, Syria,
- Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Kuwait,
- The Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC), Muscat, Oman,
- Regional Organization for the Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME), Kuwait,

II. OPENING SESSION

The launching of the Meeting took place at the main auditorium of the UN-House in Beirut under the auspices of His Excellency Dr. Michel Moussa, The Minister of Environment in Lebanon. Refer to Annex 2: Organization of Work.

The following statements were made:

- Mr. Omar Touqan, The Chief of Energy, Natural Resources and Environment Division at ESCWA welcomed the participants and emphasized on the fact that participants should take stock of where countries of the region stood with respect to SD strategies and experience in implementing Agenda 21.
- Mr. Mahmood Abdulraheem, The Regional Director of UNEP/ROWA, proposed the integration of the drafted regional environmental outlook prepared for the Third Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-3) as an input and background document for deliberation in the thematic round table.
- Ms. Fatma El-Mallah, Director of Production Sectors and Environment Department at the League of Arab States (LAS), The Technical Secretariat of The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE), emphasized on the importance of the “February 2001” Abu-Dhabi Environmental Declaration by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment. She stated that all Arab Leaders in their summit meeting in Amman, Jordan adopted the declaration in March 2001 renewing their commitments to the principle of SD.
- Mr. Rod Holesgrove, The Senior Adviser to the Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) at DESA highlighted the importance of the thematic roundtable in support of the forthcoming WSSD in reaching tangible and action-oriented decisions where further efforts are needed to implement Agenda 21. He also emphasized on the fact that deliberations during the roundtable should ensure a balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection, as these are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of SD.
- Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Deputy Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ESCWA stressed on the fact that today’s environmental geopolitics is characterized by a serious “new world disarray” where strong leadership by developed countries is missing and most countries have mixed records and agendas. She also stated that additional efforts are needed to bridge North-South differences that often hamper environmental negotiations. She emphasized on the fact that the Western Asia Region has to assess its degree of success and/or failure in reconciling its socio-economic developments and environmental agendas. She further mentioned that countries of the Western Asia Region should cooperatively be able to define the characteristics of modern environmental management tool and trends that seek synergies in policy reforms that result in environmental improvements while promoting socio-economic development.
- H.E. Dr. Michel Moussa, Lebanese Minister of Environment highlighted the need for a common platform and unified position for all Arab States in the WSSD in Johannesburg 2002.

III. PLENARY SESSION OF THE MEETING

At the beginning of the meeting an introductory statement was made by the senior adviser of DESA to introduce the guidelines to be observed for RIO+10 regional preparatory process. He identified the aims of the process and portrayed the regional roundtable as a mechanism to elaborate practical proposals, identify initiatives and suggest innovative approaches aimed at expediting progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. He emphasized on the fact that preparatory work at the regional level will be very significant in the formulation of the provisional agenda and the establishment of the main possible themes for the WSSD. He identified two types of expected outputs from the regional meetings, which will be of interest to the summit. These are: (1) Regional commitments by governments or by stakeholders which could be included in the “package of summit outcomes” but that do not require global negotiations, and (2) Issues identified at the regional level which do require global consideration and negotiations. He also revealed that while regional themes, issues and priorities vary from region to region, a minimum level of consistency and uniformity among all regions of the world should exist.

In order to provide good basis for discussion, the remainder of the plenary session was totally devoted to presenting brief background papers on priority themes and issues affecting sustainability of development in the region. The papers were categorized in the following seven priority themes:

1. Socio-economic Aspects of Sustainable Development.
2. Environmental Management & SD Governance.
3. Water Supply and Management.

4. Energy.
5. Land degradation and biodiversity.
6. Coastal and marine environment.
7. Trade and environment.

In principle, each speaker was given the time needed to brief the participants on the main achievements, obstacles and impediments, his personal prospective outlook, and proposed initiatives concerning each one of the themes. The background presentations were used as the basis to orient the discussions, to feed deliberations and to guide participants on the linkages and interfaces between the discussed priority theme and its impact on SD in the region.

The second session was dedicated to deliberate the national, sub-regional and regional initiatives to respond to regional problems, whereas, the last session discussed initiatives, innovative approaches and opportunities at the global level. Following these sessions, a working group was established to assemble all ideas and initiatives deliberated during the concluded sessions. The deductions, ideas and initiatives emanating from discussions were summarized and compiled in the form of matrices (Chapter VI) according to the addressed theme.

IV- REGIONAL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

During discussions, a number of issues emerged as main concerns for the region; such as high population growth rates and its impact on the environment, poverty with its direct effects on environmental degradation, chronic water scarcity and its quality deterioration, continuous land degradation, urbanization and the associated waste management, spreading of slums and shanty towns, environmental pressure on the resource base caused by trade liberalization, food security dilemma, loss of biodiversity, marine pollution and degradation of coastal and marine environments, etc. Insufficient public participation in decision-making processes, marginalizing stakeholders, lack of funds, weak capacities, gender imbalance, insufficient information, inadequate transparency, lack of peace and security in the region and inadequate governance for SD are some of the factors identified by the roundtable for impeding SD.

Following the presentation of the background papers, elaborate Roundtable discussions were conducted on the second and third days of the Meeting. The discussions elaborated on the achievements and constraints facing progress towards SD, but they were more focused on the initiatives and proposals at the regional and international levels. The matrix compiled in Chapter VI summarises in bullets all the technical detailed outcomes of the discussions carried-out during the meeting regarding achievements, constraints, initiatives and proposals for action plans to implement Agenda 21 and to further regional and global SD.

It is believed that the outputs, given in the matrix is providing a regional platform or a base for more discussions from a wider audience that will be present at the Stakeholder Roundtable to be held in Bahrain, 23-25 September 2001. The outcomes of both roundtables will be carried over to the Regional Prepcom CAMRE Ministerial Session to convene in Cairo at the LAS from 28 to 30 October 2001.

IV-1 Achievements in Implementing Agenda 21 Since UNCED:

Since Rio 1992, SD progress in the Western Asia Region has been neither smooth nor easy. In most of the cases, policy makers have had to confront the sheer complexity of linking environment and development problems. The following were identified as some of the achievements made in the Western Asia Region since UNCED 1992.

- In the last nine years, governments in the Western Asia Region have been seeking more effective means to promote SD through behavioural changes while maintaining efficacy and freedom.
- On the social front, countries of the Western Asia Region have made significant progress in education, extending life expectancy, lower infant mortality, better health care, sanitation and literacy for women.

- On the economic front, most countries of the Western Asia Region have undergone economic reform and restructuring. They promoted market economies, decentralization and lowered inflation rates. The region has witnessed substantial privatisation efforts associated with increase in revenues and propagation of secondary industries.
- On the institutional level, some countries in the Western Asia Region have made real and substantial progress in setting up for SD. There are now national councils or co-ordinating bodies in the field of SD and NGOs are flourishing.
- Countries in the Western Asia Region have realised and admitted that their environmental problems are critical and there is no means of untying socio-economic development from environmental protection.
- Some countries in the Western Asia Region have levied environmental taxes to discourage the unsustainable use of materials and energy while the rest continue to subsidise inefficient water and energy use, and mining. The emerging use of market instruments (where feasible) to achieve sustainable development in the NEAP in the region is a very welcomed trend. Meanwhile, most Governments of the Western Asia Region have started working with the private sector, not against it.
- Apart from the global success achieved in controlling Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS), the other conventions have seen limited progress in the region.
- National & local agenda-21, NSSD/NES/NEAP have been formulated in most countries of the Western Asia Region providing blueprints for action and setting time-bound goals and targets.
- The preparation of NSDS (NES & NEAP) in most countries of the Western Asia Region has given new impetus to assess past environmental policies at the national and local levels. In the Western Asia Region a lot was learned about multi-sectoral, bottom-up, participatory, and integrated approaches, what is effective and what is not, which approaches are efficient and which are practical.
- The roundtable valued the efforts made by the LAS assisted by regional UN organisations in identifying, harmonizing, testing and utilising SD indicators and indices for monitoring and reporting on SD at the local, national, sub-regional, regional and global levels.
- Since Rio 1992, a large number of countries of the Western Asia Region have undertaken regulatory actions to strengthen national policy frameworks. In most of the countries of the Western Asia Region national councils of sustainable development and/or environmental protection have been established, some countries invested high-level policy-making and co-ordination powers. Few countries are using fiscal measures, economic incentives as well as conventional environmental management tools to change unsustainable production and consumption patterns.
- Broader participation by major groups through NGOs and local initiatives represent a positive development in the region since UNCED.
- Increased public awareness on environmental conservation and in relation to the concepts of SD.
- Some local communities have developed local agenda-21; however, the degree of success in integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development are not remarkable yet. This modest degree of success is attributed to centralization of decision-making, lack of local taxation mechanisms to finance SD, and government bureaucracy.

IV-2 Prospective Outlooks and Main Constraints:

Despite all the efforts exerted by countries of the Western Asia Region, the roundtable expressed serious concerns that the region is entering the new millennium without an integrated plan of action and/or clear commitments to confront its serious water scarcity dilemma, continuous environmental degradation and other enormous challenges such as poverty, impacts of globalisation, etc.

- The roundtable has observed that there is still a lack of clarity and/or regional consensus on what sustainability exactly means. Therefore, it was felt that a public discourse should be opened on the concept itself and the strategies to achieve sustainability.

- The roundtable noted that the poverty situation existing in some countries of the region represent a significant impediment to SD.
- The persistence of poverty in some parts of the Western Asia Region, together with a standard of living based on excessive consumption in other parts of the Region are both incompatible with achieving the sustainable use of the region's resources.
- Apart from the oil rich Gulf States, the debt burden is an additional hurdle facing the rest of the countries in the Western Asia Region. The need to meet high interest payments has severely constrained the ability of those governments to provide resources for basic services and to invest in growth while protecting and conserving natural resources.
- It is unfortunate to find that the gap between industrialised countries and the region's developing countries has widened. On the global scale direct foreign investment and joint venture have gone up, however, some 80% of this investment has been made available only to 10 countries in South East Asia. On-the-other-hand poor countries in the Western Asia Region have been almost totally marginalized.
- With the implementation of climate change convention, the economic stakes in the Western Asia Region are very high. This leads the region to the heart of the matter: what socio-economic and possibly political ramification does Kyoto convention has on the oil exporting countries of the Region? Like the rest of the world community, oil-exporting countries in the region are not willing or prepared to bear the unfair consequences of the convention. It is important to note that based on plain economic reasons the convention was resisted even by some of the most developed countries.
- There is a widening gap between the requirements of sustainability and the reality of socio-economic development policies in countries of the Western Asia Region. In particular the implementation of environmental policies is insufficient. The political measures as such are ineffective.
- The people's concern for their quality of life in the Western Asia Region does not reach the political institutions, reciprocally, the policies and actions of institutions do not reach the minds of the people.
- A lack of communication between environmental legislators and the bodies responsible for implementation at the different levels of government and insufficient information, involvement and participation of the people concerned in the process of policy making are one of the reasons why environmental policies are often not implemented effectively.
- Another reason for the slow or imperfect implementation of SD is the unwillingness on the part of national governments to hinder or to slow down the flow of foreign investments. To attract business opportunities, some countries of the Western Asia Region achieved competitive advantages by softening environmental requirements and regulations.
- Due to lack of regional harmonization of environmental standards and policies, environmental standards may be too lax in some countries of the Western Asia Region and too rigid in others. As a result, some countries of the Western Asia Region are often reluctant to implement strict environment legislation to avoid losing economic opportunities to other countries of the region that are applying more lax environmental regulations.
- Apart from oil rich gulf states, uncontrolled population growth, rapid urbanisation and migration resulting from worsening living conditions are all posing an enormous challenge to the rest of the Western Asia Region with respect to housing, health, education, and urban infrastructure, specially in sanitation and urban transport.
- Most of the countries of the Western Asia Region have been hampered by inadequate financial, institutional and technical capacities and have struggled to put in place effective institutions for managing social, economic and environmental issues in an integrated manner.
- The international donors have, for various reasons, not lived up to the expectations raised by the global partnership struck at UNCED. The volume of development assistance has been in decline since the earth summit. Developed countries, as a group, have failed to fulfil their commitments particularly for the LDC in the Western Asia Region. So far, the provision of financial resources required for the implementation of Agenda 21, for LDC of the region has fallen far short of needs.

- The compartmentalised nature of government structures in the Western Asia Region has often been an obstacle to finding coordinated responses to SD needs.
- Environmental Ministries, department annexed to ministries or low-level councils in most of countries of the Western Asia Region are either not central in the governmental decision making structure, or have a limited influence over sectoral ministries.
- The use of economic instruments such as water pricing for demand management is faced with serious cultural denial, conflict with historic long-established practices, religious arguments, divergence from social traditions and political disagreement. Efforts are underway in some countries of the region to price the services procured by water resources development and/or delivery.
- Most of the countries of the Western Asia Region lack the resources needed to implement the NSDSs already formulated or to continue supporting National Committees for SD that were established in response to Rio 1992.
- A fragmented and inconsistent donor driven approach to support national/local SDSs without a sense of national/local ownership has often failed in promoting the implementation of such strategies in the Western Asia Region. The most successful external support for the Western Asia Region existed when donors, including regional organizations, mobilized funding, provided consultative fora and played catalytic roles, while encouraging national agencies and experts lead the process.
- Although, most intellectuals in the Western Asia Region master English as a second language, yet the problem of access to non-Arabic up-to-date information on SD is even more urgent among the public servants and most stakeholders. The language barrier in some cases was identified as a barrier to comprehend and implement SD concepts.

IV-3- Identification of New Initiatives and Commitments :

IV-3-1- Regional Initiatives and Commitments :

- The roundtable took note of Abu-Dhabi Declaration on the perspective of Arab Environmental Action declared on the 3rd of February 2001 by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment in the United Arab Emirates. The roundtable considered the declaration as a vision and a commitment by countries of the Western Asia Region to further their SD efforts in the twenty first century.
- A real and indispensable alteration in consumption & production patterns in the Western Asia Region need to be urgently made.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region should have a double priority to be jointly undertaken. First they must show that protecting the environment is worthwhile, or alternatively that the cost of doing nothing is exorbitant. This is a task principally for economists and sociologist assisted by environmental scientists. Second it is to translate this message in such a way to mobilise the public at large. Nobody can do this better than NGOs that should be further promoted in the region and the media.
- Good community level and bottom-up approaches are often discouraged by cumbersome bureaucratic procedures in the Western Asia Region. Institutional reforms and restructuring should be undertaken in the Western Asia Region to minimize bureaucracy while maximizing interdepartmental coordination and collaboration and greater participation of civil society groups.
- The Western Asia Region should regard participation as an indispensable ingredient for effective SD policy development and implementation. This means a real and thorough involvement of citizens (including the private sector) in SD decision-making. This can be achieved by building and investing in partnerships that work. This in itself creates a sense of shared responsibility for better management.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region should work further in involving and informing the public as an effective and efficient way to protect the environment, whether through education

on environmental issues, eco-labelling, publishing pollution emission data, or building institutions that involve the public directly in resource management.

- The roundtable is calling upon regional organizations covering trade issues to establish a regional trade and environment program to address and co-ordinate regional activities relevant to the issue.
- SD within the Western Asia Region requires institutional reforms for the optimisation of procedural arrangements of environmental governance. Actors of the civil society, including scientific communities, advisory institutions, NGOs, non-profit grassroots organizations should be supported, consulted and involved in framing and monitoring sustainability policies.
- The roundtable is calling upon countries of the region to strengthen their political commitments and efforts in the implementation of SD policies and enhancing the quality of life for all sectors of the population, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups such as children and women.
- For purposes of formulation, monitoring, implementation, and evaluation, governments and NGOs in the Western Asia Region should further develop and strengthen their capacities to monitor environmental performance in relation to socio-economic development; collect & interpret data; select & use indicators; conduct impact assessments and use modern technology to manage information.
- Particular attention should be given to promoting coordination & cooperation between various sectors in government to enhance the capacity of countries of the Western Asia Region to support national and local efforts for implementing SD strategies.
- National multi-stakeholder consultations should not be a token process of getting “precooked” government plans and programs rubber-stamped by the public. Rather they should become fora for authentic and real participation and dialogue.
- Realising that returns on environmental investments far exceed the return on other investments, the roundtable emphasised on the need for securing a lasting-source of finance to support SD efforts in the region. This might entail the establishment of a regional mechanism to fund environmental aspects of socio-economic development activities.
- Regional organizations should be responsible in the follow-up of international environmental conventions signed or ratified by countries of the Western Asia Region.

IV-3-2- Global Initiatives:

- The roundtable felt that after some 10 years from UNCED 1992, countries of the region need more assistance and better focus from UN organizations working in the region. This should entail better co-ordination to collectively assist countries of the Western Asia Region develop, implement, follow-up, monitor, evaluate, readjust and report on their SD strategies and action plans.
- Today’s environmental geopolitics is characterised by a serious “new-world disarray” in which strong leadership by developed countries is missing and most countries have mixed records and agendas. Countries of the Western Asia Region are convinced that the world cannot effectively achieve SD without the full involvement of the developing countries. Additional efforts are needed to bridge North-South differences that often hamper environmental negotiations.
- The roundtable is calling upon the international community to rise to its UNCED commitments and meet its moral responsibilities by increasing assistance for capacity building, transfer of environmental sound technologies, and provision of financial support for countries in need to develop and pursue SD.
- The roundtable has also observed that the transfer of environmentally sound technology to the region is extremely insufficient for realising SD. The roundtable calls upon the industrialized countries to take the necessary measures to facilitate access and transfer ESTs for countries of the Western Asia Region on concessional and favourable terms in line with Agenda 21. The roundtable also calls upon the UN to play a more active role in enhancing access of developing countries for ESTs.

- Achieving SD will require the donor community to give top priority for the assistance of countries of the Western Asia Region to further enhance the integration of social, economic and environmental policies. Efforts should be made to ensure the provision of basic social services to the LDC, especially in rural areas, to improve education and health services, and to empower women as a resource manager at the community level.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region are concerned from the potential impacts of global warming on the livelihoods of millions of people living in low-lying coastal areas. The threat posed by warmer temperature and rising sea levels to millions resident of small-island (Bahrain), small Gulf States, Palestine and Northern Egypt, is considerable. The roundtable is calling upon developed countries to accept and bear their fair-share in reducing their emissions.
- The roundtable noticed that foreign financial assistance for countries in need in the region as recommended in Agenda 21 has not been adequately realized. The roundtable reminds the industrialised countries of their pledge to allocate 0.7% of their GNP for assisting developing countries and urges them to honour their made commitments.
- The roundtable stressed on the growing need for the establishment of an enabling global economic environment which provide poor countries of the Western Asia Region access to investment capitals, advanced Environmentally Sound Technologies (ESTs), debt relief and easier access to international market.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region emphasised the importance of enhancing co-operation with UN bodies responsible for SD to provide further support for countries of the region. In this connection, countries of the Western Asia Region call upon the international community for more resources to support regional UN organizations and to contribute more generously to environmental funds allocated to assist developing countries of the region.
- Achieving sustainable development requires equitable global partnership that is truly responsive to the needs of countries of the Western Asia Region and that ensures their fair share of the globalisation benefits.
- Where citizens recognise institutions as their own and acting in their interest seeing decision through cannot be a major problem. However, when global environmental issues are addressed particularly carbon emission, people in the Western Asia Region feel subject to foreign governments, they tend to react or obstruct or, at least, remain inactive. Therefore, developed countries are called to play an exemplary role devoid of any political or economical gains to persuade the public in countries of the region to take responsibility for their fair share.
- The roundtable emphasised on the need for the strengthening of global, inter-regional, regional and sub-regional co-operation for promoting environmental technology transfer, information networking and adopting measures for encountering potential negative impacts of globalisation.
- Given the high share of oil revenues in GDP of oil exporting countries in the Western Asia Region, negative socio-economic implications associated with the implementation of Kyoto GHG mitigation strategies are far-reaching and will encompass all countries of the region. The Western Asia Region oil exporting countries count on the international community to compensate them for the potential socio-economic devastation and appeal for more time and technical assistance to diversify and restructure their economies.
- The roundtable is calling for the support of developed countries in building the intellectual, institutional and technical capacities for countries of the Western Asia Region in need to enable them improve their land use and implement sustainable agriculture concepts.

V- SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS MADE AT THE PLENARY SESSION

The presentation/s delivered for each theme in the first day of the thematic roundtable are systematically summarised according to the following order: (i) Current state of affair of the addressed theme at the regional level, (ii) Achievements made since UNCED 1992, (iii) Impediments and constraints hindering the implementation of Agenda 21 for this particular theme and (iv) Proposal and

initiatives made by the speaker/s to promote and expedite the implementation of Agenda 21 in relation to the addressed theme.

V-1- Socio-economic Aspects of SD in the Western Asia Region:

- Economic growth and development in the Western Asia Region are cyclically tied to oil revenues. In general, oil revenues surpluses to the Gulf Cooperate Council (GCC) countries led to large investments in infrastructure, and human resources. The heavy dependence of the regional economy on oil led to a serious deficiency in diversification of economies.
- Expenditures in most countries of the Western Asia Region increased at relatively higher rates than revenues to meet the growing demands of an expanding public administration, rising inflationary pressures and the resulting increases in the wages of public servants, in addition to massive increase in defence spending.
- Financing these deficits is made by drawing on foreign reserves and by the issuance of domestic debt instruments. As a result, structural disequilibria became evident and debt rose substantially for many of the countries in the Western Asia Region, forcing them to undertake major economic reform programs.
- Western Asia Region is vulnerable to the impact of international phenomena such as globalisation and the fast proliferation of information and communication technologies. The region generally endures from imposed macro-economic structural adjustment, reform policies and privatisation that were often not socially sensitive.
- Gender issues and equity are becoming an increasingly important part of the political agenda in the region. Overall rates of literacy have increased in some countries over the last two decades. Female literacy has also shown a steady increase in most countries of the Western Asia Region however it remained lower than male population.
- A general consensus has been formed in the region stressing that economic development cannot be divorced from the social and environmental nor from political and cultural dimensions of development.
- In order to face globalisation, labour market in countries of the Western Asia Region needs to improve its skills by reforming education and technical skills. Work behaviour and attitudes need to change where there will be less dependence on one sector (oil sector) or on one employer (public sector).
- Countries of the Western Asia Region need to grapple with the acute social problems resulting from disproportionate income distribution leading to high-rates of unemployment, weakening or disappearance of middle class, degrading poverty in rural, slums and remote areas.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region need to combat the unbalance provision of basic social services in rural and remote areas including education, health and housing leading to a deterioration in the quality of these services, illiteracy and health deficiencies, urbanisation and human movements, especially the refugees and displaced.
- Threats to community cohesion and to family structure and values, and limited advancement in the status of women and more limited participation in the development process also need to be addressed aggressively in the region.
- In some countries of the Western Asia Region, a good number of people live in condition of extreme poverty, with the majority of them in rural areas. Women and children suffer disproportionately from the effects of extreme poverty and often bear the burnt of economic downturns and environmental degradation.
- There is a need to formulate gender-sensitive socio-economic policies that address poverty, unemployment, empowerment of women, disability accessibility and literacy, etc,
- There is a need to capitalise on the limited available opportunities to meet these challenges. This involves furthering sustainable human development within an enabling environment that advocates transparent and accountable governance, realises genuine democracy, safeguards human rights, and integrates social and environmental dimensions into economic development.

V-2- Environmental Management and Governance for SD:

- Environmental institutions in the Western Asia Region are either not central in the governments decision making structure, or have limited influence over sectoral ministries.
- If UNCED has had an impact in the region, it was most pronounced in a new and higher level of priority granted to environmental issues. Environmental legislation was revised and environmental administration units were strengthened. As a direct result, it can be stated without too much exaggeration, that the state of environment witnessed some improvement in most of the Western Asia Region, mainly curbing some evident sources of pollution.
- The level of public awareness witnessed a remarkable upsurge and the number of NGOs, addressing environmental issues increased significantly throughout the region.
- Most of the countries in the Western Asia Region have developed cross-sectoral National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) in the form of NES and NEAP. However, the level of implementation is disappointing.
- Although these NSDSs were frequently effective in highlighting important environmental issues, they have sometimes been less successful in identifying priorities and policy instruments for action and they mostly missed making explicit links to policy changes.
- Cultural, political and socio-economic aspects are not adequately reflected in the NSDSs. Criteria for selecting policy options for strategy implementation is often not well defined. They usually lack information on their cost-effectiveness or whether they are technically feasible. The social, political, and cultural acceptability is often overlooked.
- SD policy instruments such as command and control, economic, participation, awareness etc. are used one at a time (not as a mix) without synergy or linkages to maximise their collective impacts.
- Most of the NSDSs in the Western Asia Region have failed to identify the optimum institutional and administrative rearrangement needed to effectively co-ordinate and implement their action plans. In most of the cases, NSDSs are not compatible with other sector's strategies.
- Use of economic instruments for SD in the Western Asia Region is severely handicapped by inadequate and/or unreliable environmental monitoring systems, lack of environmental health records, inadequacy of ecological and health risk assessments and lack of environmental accounting and monetary evaluation of health and ecological impacts of development.
- Poor decentralisation is a major obstacle for financing the implementation of local agenda 21 in most of the countries in the Western Asia Region.
- According to the prevailing culture, traditions and political norms in some countries of the Western Asia Region, the decision-making hierarchy still cannot easily tolerate participatory bottom-up approach, or accept any public pressure.
- Revealing environmental information is still considered by some authorities in the region as a sensitive issue that can lead to public confusion or panic, tarnish the country image and might impair tourism and development.
- The noted delinquency in realising equitable and comprehensive peace in the Western Asia Region hinders the integrated management of shared water resources and obstructs eco-zone management. The fear of downstream countries that upstream riparian countries might impose a price for the water flowing to them is obstructing the fees mechanisms in water pricing in the region.
- The speakers stressed on the necessity of institutionalisation of new policy in environmental management, SD governance and other related areas, both within and between governments of the region. In order to achieve SD, the speakers identified and recommended, among other things, the following actions:
 1. Raising public environmental awareness,
 2. Establishment of partnerships with all stakeholders,
 3. Promotion of public and major group participation,
 4. Encouragement of sustainable production,
 5. Advocating sustainable consumption,

6. Integrating SD policies within government programs,
 7. Nourishing cleaner production mechanisms,
 8. Authorisation of public disclosure of information and acknowledgement of the public right to know,
 9. Utilisation of environmental accounting, economic tools and markets instruments,
 10. Reconciliation between socio-economic development and environmental protection.
- In order to implement an approach for SD governance that integrates economic, environmental, and social priorities at the institutional level the speakers proposed the creation of an independent environmental authority. This authority should be supported by a Higher Council for Environment (HCE) at the Ministerial level and headed by the Prime Minister (PM) is a better arrangement to bring ministries and offices together to reconcile different sectoral approaches.
 - Traditional development plans should be progressively transformed into SD strategies and plans.
 - Command and control alone cannot ensure the implementation of SD goals. Market based instruments and other policy and social initiatives are also needed.

V-3- Water Resources Management in the Western Asia Region:

- Misconception concerning food security and use of agriculture as a justifying means for distributing oil wealth in some GCC countries led to the promotion of heavily subsidised large-scale agriculture plans for greening the desert using scarce and exhaustible water resources.
- Increased demand on scarce water resources in the region is mainly due to the rapid increase in population. More than 80% of the fresh water resources available to the Western Asia Region are diverted to agriculture.
- The speakers attributed the problems of water resources management in the region to several factors, among them:
 1. National policies in the region are driven by a strive for food security,
 2. Lack of equitable peace, mutual mistrust and prevailing scepticism among riparian countries sharing same water resources.
 3. Escalating sectoral competition for a dwindling water supply,
 4. Predominance of wasteful irrigation practices,
 5. Inadequate compliance, inspection and enforcement capacities,
 6. Insufficient public involvement and awareness, and
 7. Fragmentation, weakness and overlap of water resources management authorities.
 8. Lack of inspection and monitoring capacities needed for the application of economic instruments.
- The speakers attributed the water quality degradation in the Western Asia Region to the following two major factors; the first is the over-exploitation while the second is the discharge of domestic, agricultural and industrial effluents beyond the assimilative capacity of aquatic systems. Water-borne diseases and outbreaks have been proven to be a major threat to public health in most countries of the region.
- Although some countries of the Western Asia Region witnessed some economic growth during the 1990's, they were incapable in achieving considerable increases in water supply and sanitation service coverage. Their ability to allocate internal funds as well as foreign finance was noticeably undermined by the high levels of external debt.
- The predominance of supply-side management approach, in combination with weak and fragmented institutional structures, still prevails in the Western Asia Region, as water related services are extended mostly to promote public health and food production.

- Since UNCED in 1992, countries of the Western Asia Region have made considerable effort to raise awareness about water resources management scarcity and to demonstrate to the public the necessity for demand control.
- During the last few years there has been a slowly but augmenting recognition among countries of the Western Asia Region of the necessity to entrust water resources management to the lowest appropriate levels and to promote public/private partnership as an effective means to make more efficient and ecologically aware utilization of the scarce water resources. Major groups in the Western Asia Region such as farmers, NGOs, academia, women, youth, etc. are increasingly becoming inherent to water resources management at the national level in general and local levels in particular.
- Out of necessity, most of the countries of the Western Asia Region started investment in more efficient irrigation technologies. Success stories in increased average yields and higher productivity, wastewater reuse have been reported from several countries of the region.
- Important progress in water resources data generation, compilation, retrieval and dissemination has been made possible in the Western Asia Region. This was realised by the adoption of modern field measuring systems, information and communication technologies. Technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), monitoring by remote sensing, computerised databases of water resources are still to be made available on a much larger scale in countries of the Western Asia Region.
- Financial commitments to water supply and sanitation at the national and local levels in countries of the Western Asia Region have remained partially unfulfilled. Even with the overall raise in public funding for the sector, the disparity between the level of investment needed to achieve full water and sanitation coverage and the level of investment actually made is still sizeable.
- Laws for water resources protection and management have been enacted in most of the countries of the Western Asia Region, however, there is always a lack of political will and inadequate capacity to enforce issued water legislation.
- Given the crosscutting and multidisciplinary nature of water resources issues, large number of regional and international organizations are addressing the issues from various angles. In order to avoid duplication of efforts the speakers are calling upon the international organizations involved in water sector to further focus and prioritise coordination, collaboration and integration of work.
- Given the fact that over 80% of the water resources available to the Western Asia Region originates from outside its political boundaries, the speakers called upon international and regional organizations to further expand interregional cooperation with up-stream riparian states for more efficient and equitable management of shared water resources, river basin management, eco-zone and watershed management, and on implementation of integrated water resources management strategies.
- The speakers called upon countries of the Western Asia Region to strengthen regional and international cooperation in the area of institutional and human capacity building, research and information sharing and technology transfer.
- Despite the promotion of strategic integrated approach for water resources management by UN, regional and sub-regional organizations, increasing efforts are to be made in countries of the Western Asia Region for the formulation and implementation of integrated national water policies and programs.
- The speakers called upon countries of the Western Asia Region to solicit from relevant UN organization to provide further technical assistance in capacity building, development of integrated water management policies and strengthening water resources institutions.

V-4 Energy:

- The Western Asia Region energy sector is characterized by unsustainable energy consumption patterns with a high-energy intensity equivalent of 1.7 time the world average and a wide range of per-capita energy consumption spanning from 200 to 12,740 kg.o.e/capita/yr.

- In the Western Asia Region, the increase in the utilization of electric power has surpassed GDP growth by a large margin demonstrating the fundamental significance of electric power for economic development.
- The region has an installed electric generating capacity of over 72 GW, however, over 40% of its population lack access to electricity. Regional interconnections of electric grids have witnessed significant expansion lately.
- Since UNCED 1992, collective actions by governments of the Western Asia Region, international organizations and NGOs yielded significant increase in public awareness on inequity in energy distribution and use, energy linked environmental problems and unsustainable consumption patterns.
- The nurtured public awareness in the region led to slight improvement in the efficiency with which energy is utilized in industry, power generation, lighting, household appliances and transportation. New policy measures, upgraded technologies and means of management contributed to this result.
- Governments of several countries in the Western Asia Region introduced with various degrees of success, national policies and economic incentives for the promotion of renewable sources of energy. This also entailed national support programs and the development of the needed institutional capabilities.
- Despite the blessing of having an extensive resource base for renewable energy in the Western Asia Region, its growth is slow and its aggregate contribution to total energy yield remains minimal and insignificant. Renewable energy, including hydropower generation constitutes only 3 % of the power production in the region.
- Many countries of the Western Asia Region have switched to natural gas fired combined cycles featuring low cost, high efficiency and reduced environmental impacts whenever natural gas is readily available as a preferred option. In 1998 the natural gas contributed some 41.1% of the total energy consumption in the region as compared to only 20% consumption in 1975.
- The slow pace of policy and institutional reforms that are needed to create an enabling environment for public sector investments in energy has been a major barrier to investments in the region.
- Financial and technological cooperation between industrialized and developing countries of the Western Asia Region in the field of energy has not significantly improved or augmented since UNCED.
- Mobilization of large investments from domestic and foreign sources to meet the current demand and the anticipated growth of the energy sectors in the Western Asia Region represent a real challenge. In this connection, the speakers called countries of the Western Asia Region in need to establish better financial cooperation with industrialized countries and to seek further assistance from International Organizations in developing appropriate institutional tools to promote large-scale foreign direct investment.

V-4 Land Degradation:

- The degradation of land resources in the Western Asia Region continues to be one of the most prominent environmental issues. Chronic water scarcity, high population growth rate, intensive land farming and poverty are all posing significant pressure on the highly susceptible and fragile ecosystem.
- Rangeland represents a good percent of total area in the Western Asia region. However, meagre plant productivity and scanty variability in species characterise this plant cover. Overgrazing, persistent draught, uprooting of woody species for cooking and heating by the poor, tillage and mismanagement of scarce water resources are the main reasons for degradation of rangeland in the Western Asia Region.
- Salt damages to irrigated land are extensive and chronic problems in the Western Asia Region. Irrational use of irrigation water and poor management led to salinization, water logging, alkalinisation and nutrient depletion in large areas of the region.

- Fast population growth and demographic redistribution led to the loss of fertile arable lands to urbanisation, industrial development and non-agricultural activities.
- The persistent geopolitical instability in and around the countries of the Western Asia Region has urged governments in the region to adopt strict national policies for food security. Fulfilment of these policies necessitated the application of large-scale agricultural protectionism, subsidised pricing for agricultural inputs and products and imposition of trade barriers. Heavily subsidised agrochemicals along with free or low price irrigation water, severely impacted water and land resources and contributed to unsustainable patterns of agriculture production.
- Desertification as the last phase of land degradation is common in the region particularly among countries of the Western Asia Region where the agricultural sector has significant contribution to the national economy. This phenomenon is affecting the most vulnerable and less advantaged groups of the Western Asia Region societies.
- Many countries of the Western Asia Region have undertaken the preparation and implementation of national and regional action programmes to combat desertification. Most countries of the Western Asia Region joined the convention to combat desertification. The region is in the process of formulating its action plan emanating from the regional strategy.
- Most countries of the Western Asia Region developed and enacted water and land uses legislation with various but generally modest degrees of success due to poor implementation and enforcement.
- Since UNCED 1992, countries of the Western Asia Region have accumulated better knowledge and understanding on their land resources and agricultural practices and understood their linkages with environment. This advancement is directly attributed to the steadily decreasing costs of rapidly evolving modern information technologies and decision-making tools.
- Most countries of the Western Asia Region introduced and progressively used Geographic Information System (GIS) for combining land resources uses and socio-economic information, which is proving very valuable for SD decision-making. However, more efforts need to be carried out to improve networking and regular updating of information at the local, national and hopefully regional levels. Despite these progressions, the loss of land resources and increasing severity and extent of land resource degradation continue.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region pursued to various degrees, market liberalisation and deregulation policies. In many cases, uneven success in economic and agricultural reform has compelled some governments to reintroduce or reinforce intervention practices.
- Some countries of the Western Asia Region adopted improved production technologies, which resulted in more food (mostly cereal) production, while others have not benefited equally in respect of technology adoption and food increases. However, it has also been noticed that technologies required to escape rural poverty among small-scale farmers are not reaching the most needy in the region.
- Unfortunately, countries of the Western Asia Region did not adjust their agriculture and land management policies to take advantage from available opportunities created by the widespread development of global competitive markets.
- As trade barriers have been reduced and environmental standards have been enforced, many agricultural producers in the region are facing increasing competition while trying to cope with declining support services and loss of subsidies owing to structural adjustment and imposed economic reform policies.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region need to sharpen their understanding of the mechanisms and factors affecting desertification and drought.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region have to allocate more resources, initiate innovative solutions in support of land users in rural communities to deal with new global changes and overcome the constraints faced by the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged, in particular women, indigenous people and small farmers.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region have to allocate additional resources for the full implementation and enforcement of nationally acceded international conventions, Multi-

Lateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) and national regulatory instruments addressing land use management, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and rural development concepts.

- Countries of the Western Asia Region have to carryout inter-ministerial harmonization and reconciliation of policies, strategies and programs for (i) land use, (ii) integrated ecosystem management, (iii) sustainable agriculture and rural development plans and (iv) integrated resources management.

V-6- Coastal and Marine Environment:

- The coastal and marine environment constitutes the major part that supports life in the Western Asia Region. It represents to large coastal communities in the GCC sub-region, the main source for drinking water through thermal desalination; the sole source for industrial cooling water; the exclusive trade route for oil & gas exploration, exploitation, and exports; and goods import. The costal environment also represents one of the main sources of high quality protein; recreation outlet for the poor; good opportunities for marine parks and eco-tourism development and for urban expansion.
- Dredging and land reclamation projects were taking place along the shores of many countries of the Western Asia Region. As a result, these countries are now facing significant destruction of marin e habitats, death of coral reefs, coastal depositions and erosion, and loss of nursing grounds and productive areas as a result of such activities.
- Rapid urbanisation and encroachment of human settlements and tourism development on prime coastal areas resulted in a significant physical alteration of the coastlines of countries of the Western Asia Region.
- Pollution from land-based sources has been recognised as one of the major threats to the marine environment in the Western Asia Region. Continuous discharge of partially treated industrial and municipal wastewater represents a major pressure on the health of the marine ecosystem.
- The GCC sub-region is characterised by intensive oil and gas exploitation, processing, reformulation and shipping. When combined with massive brine and cooling water discharges from power-desalination installations, the (Arabian) Persian Gulf is likely to become one of the most polluted seas.
- Significant progress has been achieved over the past decade in promoting the integrated approach of coastal zone management in most of the countries of the Western Asia Region. Furthermore, most of the countries in the Western Asia Region realised the necessity of EIA studies and developed policies and regulation for the implementat ion of these policies to approve coastal and near-shore marine projects.
- Progress has been achieved in protecting marine living resources and in sustainable fisheries development and management in the Western Asia Region. A number of policy measures have been taken to reduce over fishing in most countries of the Western Asia Region. These policy measures include restrictions on fishing seasons, banning the sale of certain species, regulating fishing gears, restricting fishing areas etc. However, these policies are severely hampered by inadequate awareness, ineffectual enforcement capacity and weak institutional arrangement.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region are all taking parts in major action plans organised in three sub-regional conglomerations (Mediterranean, Kuwait, Red Sea & Gulf of Aden action plans). These action plans aim at preserving the coastal and marine environment and at ensuring sustainable development of the coastal zones.
- The region is constantly plagued by regional wars and aggressions of various scales. These conflicts are inflicting serious damage to the marine and costal environment particularly in form of massive oil spills and disposal of large amounts of debris.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region should promote interregional cooperation in the protection of the marine environment.

V-7- Trade and Environment:

- Countries of the Western Asia Region have well-founded fears about developed countries using environmental trade measures and regulations as means to discriminate against their exports. Their main concern is that stringent trade measures imposed by developed countries might not realize the region's economic or environmental improvement.
- Small and medium size enterprises in countries of the Western Asia Region are not prepared to cope with the implications of trade liberalisation.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region should raise the awareness of decision-makers on the inter-related issues of trade and environment and build the capacity of officers and personnel in all related public and private institutions.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region should start a dialogue between ministries of trade, environment, agriculture and industry. Relevant regional and international organizations working in the region are expected to play a major role in promoting this dialogue.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region that are WTO members should become more active in participating in the meetings of the committee of trade and environment (CTE). They should become more involved in CTE and other multilateral trade and environment discussions in order to relay their viewpoints and protect the interests of their exporters.
- In order to meet the unilateral measures against products that pose risks to human, animal and plant life and health, the international community should provide the technical and capacity building assistance in order to improve, if needed, the environmental aspects of their production.
- Countries of the Western Asia Region should initiate eco-labelling schemes at the regional level in order to facilitate the attainment of eco-labels that allow products to penetrate markets in the industrialised countries.

**VI. MATRIX OF ACHIEVEMENTS, CONSTRAINTS AND INITIATIVES TO THE DIFFERENT CHAPTERS OF AGENDA 21
IN THE WESTERN ASIA REGION SINCE 1992**

Sectors	Achievements	Constraints	Initiatives and Proposals
Socio-economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Economic restructuring has improved. · Privatization has improved. · Number of Civil society groups has increased. · Inequality declining. · Inflation rates lowered. · Increase in revenues. · Increase in the secondary industries. · Increased education and literacy, especially for women. · Life expectancy improved. · Care for handicapped increased. · Infant mortality rates reduced. · Access to safe drinking water, health care, and sanitation dramatically improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Privatization has partially achieved goals. · Poverty remains a significant problem in some areas and lead to spreading of slums. · Social and environmental cost are not reflected in national accounts. · The quality of social services is questionable. · Vulnerability of the economy to external market shocks and raw materials (e.g. oil) market fluctuations. · Increase in unemployment especially among women and the younger generations. · Women and children remain the most vulnerable in the region · Social and economic conditions in the region have not benefit from globalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Integrate social and environmental dimensions into economic development. · Addressing social and economic inequity at the national and international levels. · Provide environment conducive to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). · Harmonization of customs and tariffs · Acceleration of the process of economic integration and establishing of the free trade zones at the Arab region level. · Restructuring and diversification of economies so as to minimize external market shocks. · Improving favorable investment climate. · Lifting custom protection. · Adoption of more effective population policies. · Improvement of living conditions in rural areas · Improvement of the quality of social services , especially in rural areas. · Orienting education and literacy towards a wider and more effective scale in more creative approaches

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · promoting sustainable development. · Addressing poverty as a cause and affect of environmental degradation.
Trade and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Greater awareness of the WTO, and greater participation of countries in the region. · Increased awareness of the implications and available opportunities of trade liberalizations. · Adopting institutional arrangement to address trade and environment issues. · Better awareness of the relationship between trade and environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Concern over the use of the environment as a trade barrier. · Difficulties in meeting environmental requirements/criteria relevant to international trade. · Inadequacy/disparity in standards affecting exports and imports of products. · Lack of appropriate human resource capacity. · Deficiency in institutional structures to cope with globalizations. · Small and medium enterprises are not prepared to cope with the implication of trade liberalization. · Difficulties in monitoring environmental dumping of goods. · Trade liberalization could pose some pressures on the resource base. · Trade barriers and poverty are interlinked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Greater involvement in WTO discussions with a view to ensuring the harmonization of trade and environment. · Enhance the process of adapting national product processes to meet market requirements. · Upgrade and harmonize environmental standards to avoid potential environmental dumping. · Undertake measures against importing dirty industries. · Strengthening regional integration and cooperation. · Enhance capacity to implement relevant international conventions e.g. biosafety. · Enhance business and public sector capacity to deal with pressures of globalization. · Promote environmental accounting and the enhancement of national environmental regulations. · Accelerate the process of trade liberalization to foster a greater access of the countries of the region to world markets as well as to alleviate poverty. · Avoid the use of the environment as a trade barrier.

Land			
1.Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cultivated area increasing. · Productivity improving. · Food production increasing. · Water use efficiency/ land productivity improving. · Water use efficiency / food production improving. · Cropping patterns improving. · Agriculture policies improving. · Institutional setup improving. · Use of modern and efficient technologies increasing. · Preparation of national land master plans using remote sensing and GIS increasing. · National strategies for agricultural development improving. · Awareness of sustainable use of agricultural lands improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Per capita share of land decreasing. · Per capita share of food decreasing (more food imports). · Self sufficiency (food) decreasing for main commodities. · Water use efficiently (land) has a low rate of improvement. · Low rate of improvement of water use efficiency (food). · Decrease of land per capita share. · Increase of land deterioration and cultivation of marginal lands. · Decrease of water supply and deterioration of water quality. · Agriculture policies are improving but at a slower rate than demand increase. · Limited finances, including those available to acquire more efficient technologies. · Weak agricultural extension services. · Institutional setup is improving but at a slow rate, and coordination among institutions and with stakeholders are weak. · Use of technologies is increasing but at a slow rate. · Dependence on outside aid (food supply and technology transfer). · Unclear vision of the future. · National strategies and awareness are developing, however, they 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Adoption of realistic policies matching with water availability. · Setting reasonable targets for the levels of food self sufficiency. · Improving water use efficiency (techniques and genetic resources). · Selection of appropriate crop mixes and agronomic packages. · Strengthening research for development of agricultural packages for desert environment. · Development of drought and salt resistant crops using bio-technologies. · Improving the agricultural extension services at farm level. · Acquaintance of new proven technologies and genetic resources. · Coordinating the efforts of national institutions and the participation of stakeholders in the planning and execution of future developments. · Decreasing the post harvest losses (in the field storage and handling). · Addressing food demand and not only production. · Accounting in view of alternative opportunities for land, water and food commodities. · Monitoring of land resources
2. Rangelands			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Overgrazing is decreasing in limited protected areas · Land productivity improving in protected rangelands · Policies and interventions improving · Involvement of stakeholders improving · Awareness improving 	<p>lack the clear vision and well defined objectives and programmes for sustainable land and water use at the national and regional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Adopted policies and programmes of development have led to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Increasing overgrazing. 2- Decreasing Land productivity in most of the areas. · Increasing loss of biodiversity at a high rate. · Lack of proper integration and coordination among institutions, weak involvement of stakeholders and lack of effective integrated programmes. 	<p>using modern technologies, such as remote sensing and GIS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sustainable management of marginal land resources. · Regional integration of land resources management policies including food security.
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<p>Water</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited increase in total resources <p><u>Demand by Sector</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Agriculture: decreased by unit area · Municipal: improving networks · Industrial: increasing recycling · Water policies and interventions. · Policies decreased mining of non renewable fossils water. · Preparation of freshwater national master plans. · Developed agricultural policies <p><u>Interventions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Water use restriction. · Water pricing in some countries. · Reduction /removal of subsidies to agricultural inputs. <p><u>Institutional</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · More coordination between institutions and with stakeholders. · Institutional: Integration of efforts · Information: improving · Accounting: improving · Awareness: improving · Monitoring and management of water resources and demands progressing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Unsettled problems of shared water resources (surface and ground water) lead to conflicts. · Per capita shares decreasing, hampering the development. · Total demand increasing. · Per capita consumption increasing. · Aridity and erratic rainfall pattern. · Water stress index increasing to critical levels. · <u>Quality deteriorating due to;</u> · Pollution with health hazards (water borne diseases) · Depletion of water resources and conflicts · Lack of comprehensive water policies to manage water resources · Inappropriate agricultural policies (unsustainable self sufficiency) set targets for food production · Insufficient or inadequate water policies, including water valuation policies. · Fragmentation of water authorities, and weakness in implementation of water management policies. · Inter-sectoral use conflicts. · Fast pace of urbanization and rural to urban migration. · Insufficient hydrographic reliable data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sustainable management of shared water resources. · Adoption of river basin management approaches. · Encouraging desalination as alternative source of water and acquiring desalination technology. · Management of demand including taken measures. · Making use of biotechnologies to improve land productivity and water use efficiency. · Introduction of other crop mixes appropriate to desert environment. · Introduction of agricultural systems with high water use efficiencies. · Recycling of wastes to reduce/ eliminate pollution sources. · Recycling of wastewater in industry and agriculture drainage water. · Effective coordination among institutional setups and with the stakeholders.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of funds 	
Marine and Coastal Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bio treatment of solid and liquid wastes improved · Greater awareness and some improvement in mitigating pollution from land based resources, and reduction in dumping of solid and liquid waste. · Increase in number of reception facilities for oily ballast water and other waste. · Adoption of integrated coastal management and development of regional guidelines are improving. · Fish stocks are decreasing. · Improving policies. · Reduction of over fishing. · Improvement of Aquaculture. · Capacity building is improving. · Endorsement and implementation of polluter pay principle. · Contingency plans to combat oil pollution prepared in several countries. · Policies adopted for sustainable management of living marine resources, coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems (ICAM). · Coral reef management action plan formulated. · Information and statistical data on fisheries improved in some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Encroachment on coastal areas, dredging and land reclamation increasing. · Urban expansion on coastal areas without land use plans. · Inadequate awareness concerning the marine and coastal habitats, and their ecosystems. · Inadequate legislation on sustainable coastal and marine habitats and resources. · Over exploitation of some valuable marine species. · Fishing effort and landing have increased but yield has decreased. · Lack of legislation on the management of transboundary and straddling stocks and enforcement. · Absence of a regional fisheries commission in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. · Inadequate financial support to sustainable management of coastal and marine ecosystems. · Inadequate measures to combat land based and sea based pollution. · Destruction of sensitive shore habitats e.g. turtle nesting grounds. · Inadequate quality control of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Increasing awareness. · Adoption of ICAM for the sustainable development of coastal and marine environment. · Development of fisheries and aquaculture management plans at national and regional level is needed. · Development of national and regional mechanisms for sustainable management of living marine resources. · Support of stock assessment studies, financial and technical. · Expansion of Marine and coastal surveillance, monitoring and assessment of resources. · Development of waste treatment capabilities. · Managing tourism on sustainable basis to prevent adverse effects on coastal and marine resources and ecosystems. · Rehabilitation of damaged habitats · Research and development for SD of coastal and marine areas and resources. · Implementation of Global Plan of Action (GPA) at the regional level with a view of eliminating sewage releases in the coastal and marine environment and control

	<p>countries of the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Policies and action plans for reducing navigational risks were developed, and monitoring control and surveillance system were initiated. · Joint action plans (ROPME, PERSGA and MAP). · Control of over fishing improved. · Protocols on protection of biodiversity and establishment of protected areas initiated. 	<p>fisheries product.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Pressures on resources are increasing due to increased tourism and competition for resources utilization. · Introduction of invasive organisms associated with ship traffic and dumping of ballast water. 	<p>of other sources of land based pollution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Strengthening of regional contingency planning and minimization of navigational risks. · Strengthening the implementation of the provision of the law of sea (UNCLOS). · Strengthening the cooperation and integration between institutions and with stakeholders.
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<p>Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cross sectoral national environmental strategies and action plans (national and local agenda 21) are developed. · Participating approach (bottom up approach) was adopted in developing these strategies. · Larger number of government councils for sustainable development are established with higher public stakeholders and NGOs representation. · Initiation of new markets through privatization and decentralization. · Better regulatory action to strengthen national policy framework. · Significant improvement in the implementation of user fees policies. · Few countries are using physical measures, economic incentives as well as conventional environmental management tools to change on sustainable product and consumption patterns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Political and social factors hindering subsidy reduction. · Inadequate reliable and credible and environmental monitoring systems hinders the application of environmental taxation and implementations of perform bonds and fund refund systems. · Inadequate regional cooperation and coordination is hindering the full implementation of the fees policies. · Lack of comprehensive peace and security hinders the integrated management of shared resources and obstructs eco-zone and river basin management. · Inadequate decentralization is posing major obstacles in implementing local initiatives and local agenda 21. · Inadequate property rights. · Heavy reliance on command and control approach. · Strong drive for economic development is weakening the political commitments towards sustainable development. · Inadequate disclosure of information is hindering the engagement of the public. · In face of prevailing unemployment, poverty and weak infrastructures in some countries of the region, SD is taking the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Elaborate on regulations to correct the imbalance between private and public sectors in environmental liability. · Identify the optimum institutional and administrative rearrangements needed to effectively coordinate and implement their sustainable development action plans. · Develop frameworks and systems that allow for the system to follow up, monitor, evaluate and document government practices to make sure they are consistent with the NSDS and NEAP · Actors of the civil society, including scientific communities, advisory institutions, NGOs, Non profit grassroots organizations to be supported, consulted and involved in framing and monitoring sustainable development policies. · Developed countries are called to play an exemplary (leading) role devoid of any political or economical game to persuade the public in the region to take responsibility of their fair share. · International donors have to live up to the expectations raised to the global partnership struck at RIO.
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		<p>backseat; and its priority is reduced as the social and political pressures for accelerated economic developments overwhelmed governments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of coordination and cooperation between various sectors in governments. · Most of the western Asia Countries lack the resources needed to implement NSDS and NEAP. · A fragmented and inconsistent donor driving approach to support national / local SD strategy without a sense of national – local ownership. · The degree of success in integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development is not remarkable yet. · Culture, political and socio economic aspects are not fully reflected in NSDS and NEAP. · Policy instruments are used one at a time without synergy or coordination. · Lack of global leadership. 	
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited improvement in increasing energy accessibility particularly for rural areas · Relative decline on the average consumption growth rate to reach. · Remarkable increased contribution of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Policies for sustainable energy (SE) not yet sufficiently integrated with the overall and sectoral energy planning · Institutional objectives not yet appropriate or directed towards sustainable energy · Limitation of financial resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ensuring accessibility and security of energy supplies, particularly for rural areas · Integrate sustainable energy policies into the overall energy planning processes; or · Integrated energy consideration in socio-economic programmes, especially in policy-

	<p>natural gas to the total energy mix, particularly in the electric power sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Plans and efforts for introducing cleaner fuel to the transport sector (natural gas) · Several programmes for upgrading energy efficiencies, particularly in the power and industrial sectors (and/or) · Reasonable but not sufficient improvement in energy production and use efficiencies, as well as starting private ESCO's · Renewable energy technologies demonstrated and starting to reach field application particularly for wind and solar electricity generation · Strategies and demonstration for renewable energy development, particularly hydro, solar, wind and biomass · Improvement in the institutional setup, enriched expertise and limited awareness in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy · Remarkable progress in cross-boarder integration through active planning and implementation of interconnected electricity grid as well as gas networking is being considered · Move towards reform and restructuring of the sector towards more economic-management · Started regional cooperative networking and energy efficiencies and renewables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited level of awareness, industrial capabilities and extension services for renewable energy and energy efficiency programmes · Limited regional cooperation and coordination · Apparent Conflict of interest of the oil and gas community with the SD measures · Absence of partnership among planners, implementers and the community, particularly in rural areas. · Heavy dependence on foreign finance and technologies and donor agencies 	<p>making of major energy consuming sectors, namely building, transport and industrial sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Strengthening national institutions and regional cooperation mechanisms · Promoting cost-effective mix and enhancing the use of cleaner fossil fuels and renewable energy resources · Upgrading energy efficiency and reducing energy intensities · Gradual reduction of the energy sector · adverse environmental and health impacts · Promoting renewable energy applications, as appropriate. · Enhancing integration, liberalization and economic efficiency as well as phasing-out, in a socially responsive manner, subsidies · Raising awareness and capacity building for renewable energy and energy efficiency · Developing appropriate technology transfer of programs with enhanced national and regional contributions · Allocation for required funds for implementation particularly to access rural areas. · Introduction of market reforms and privatization. · Enhance the role of the energy sector in solving the water problem in the region.
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G. ORGANIZING BODIES

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2. UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME/REGIONAL OFFICE OF WESTERN ASIA (UNEP/ROWA)

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3. LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES/COUNCIL OF ARAB MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (LAS/CAMRE)

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4. ESCWA Secretariat

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Mr. Zeki Fattah
Chief, Economic Development Issues and Policies
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Mr. Hosny Khordagui
Chief, Environment Coordination Unit (ECU)
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Ms. Anhar Hegazi
Chief, Energy Issues Section (EIS)
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Mr. Mohamed Abdulrazzak
Chief, Natural Resources Section (NRS)
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Ms. Fatima Sbaity Kassem
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Mr. Abdel Hafez Issa
S. Secretary, ECU/ENRED

Ms. Shadan Jamal
Secretary, NRS, ENRED

ANNEX 2

Organization of Work

Monday, 9 April 2001

08:30 – 10:00 Registration
10:00 – 11:00 Opening Session

Opening Statements

- Chief, Energy, Natural Resources and Environment Division
Mr. Omar Touqan
- Regional Director /UNEP-ROWA
Mr. Mahmood Abdulraheem
- Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment, Technical Secretariat (CAMRE)
Mrs. Fatma El-Mallah
- Division for Sustainable Development/DESA
Mr. Rod Holesgrove
- Executive Secretary of ESCWA
Mrs. Mervat Tallawy
- H.E. Minister of Environment
Dr. Michel Moussa

11:00 – 11:30 Break

I. First Session (Achievements and Obstacles)

Chairpersons:

- Mr. Mahmood Abdulraheem
- Mr. Omar Touqan

11:30 – 11:45 Introductory Statement: Mr. Rod Holesgrove (DESA)

1. Socio-Economic Aspects:

11:45 – 12:00 Social Aspects of Sustainable Development in the ESCWA Region
Ms. Fatma Kassem (ESCWA)

12:00 – 12:15 Discussions

2. Environmental Management–Governance:

12:15 – 12:30 Governance for Sustainable Development in the ESCWA Region
Mr. Hosny Khordagui (ESCWA)

12:30 – 12:45 The Road from Environmental Protection to Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Governance in the Arab Region
Mr. Osama El-Kholy (UNEP/ROWA)

12:45 – 13:00 Discussions

3. Water Supply and Management:

13:00 – 13:15 Implications of Agenda 21: Chapter 18

- Mr. Mohamed Abdulrazzak (ESCWA)
- 13:15 – 13:30 Water Demand Management and Pollution Control
Mr. Hamed Bakeer (WHO)
- 13:30 – 13:45 Discussions
- 4. Energy, Industry and Waste Management:**
- 13:45 – 14:00 The Necessities and Possibilities of Using Solar Energy for
Achieving Sustainable Development
Ms. Anhar Hegazi (ESCWA)
- 14:00 – 14:15 Impacts of GHG Mitigation Strategies on Developing Countries; Perspective
from OPEC Countries
Mr. Ghasemzadeh (OPEC)
- 14:15 – 14:30 Discussions
- 14:30 – 15:00 Break
- 5. Land Degradation:**
- 15:00 – 15:15 Mr. Moh'd Nabil Alaa El-Din (UNEP/ROWA)
- 15:15 – 15:30 Mr. Ahmad Abido (UNEP/ROWA)
- 15:30 – 15:45 Discussions
- 6. Marine Environment:**
- 15:45 – 16:00 Background Paper on the Marine Environment of the ROWA Region
Mr. Hratch Kouyoumjian (UNEP/ROWA)
- 16:00 – 16:15 Achieving Sustainable Development of Coastal and Marine areas in the
ROPME Region
Ms. Naheda Al-Majed (UNEP/ROWA)
- 16:15 – 16:30 Discussions
- 7. Trade and Environment:**
- 16:30 – 16:45 Trade and Environment
Ms. Christine Fakhoury (ESCWA)
- 16:45 – 17:00 Discussions

Tuesday 10 April 2001

II. Second Session (National, Subregional and Regional Initiatives to respond to Regional Problems).

Chairpersons: - Mr. Osama El-Kholy

08:30 – 12:00 Roundtable discussions for elaborating on actions, initiatives, innovative approaches, challenges and opportunities at the national, regional and international levels.

12:00 – 12:30 Break

III. Third Session (Global Initiatives)

Chairpersons: - Mr. Osama El-Kholy

12:30 – 16:30 Discussing initiatives, innovative approaches and opportunities at the Global level.

Wednesday 11 April 2001

IV. Fourth Session (Consideration of Report of Round Table)

Chairpersons: - Mr. Osama El-Kholy

09:00 – 11:00 Discussion of report

V. Fifth Session (Closing Session)

Chairpersons: - Mr. Osama El-Kholy

11:00 – 12:00 Adoption of recommendations

12:00 – 12:30 Break