

SDGs-Climate Security Nexus in the Arab States: A special session at the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2021

On 30 March, UNDP participated in the 2021 edition of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD), the regions' primary mechanism for follow up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The aim of UNDP's interactive special session titled 'SDG-Climate Security Nexus in the Arab States' was to shed light on the impact of climate-security risks on the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs)

in the region. While the session presented the potential setbacks in the achievement of the SDGs, it also provided examples of two countries that have started integrating climate-security nexus considerations into national planning processes, to support the achievement of the SDGs in a durable and risk-resilient manner.

Around 100 participants from different Arab countries attended the session, including representatives of international organizations, public and private institutions, academia, NGOs, and the media.

The session was opened by Khaled Abdel Shafi, Director of the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States, who highlighted the power of climate change in exacerbating existing tensions in the region. "Water scarcity is just one example but many more exist that show how climate change can exacerbate existing socio-economic tensions and trigger conflict and forced displacement, and threaten to reverse important gains in sustainable development", said the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States Director.

In her opening remarks, Her Excellency Nada El Agizy, Director of Sustainable Development and International Development Department of the League of Arab States, stressed the importance of developing and implementing climate security programmes in the Arab states to ensure the delivery on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The special session revolved around three main thematic questions. The first question addressed the manifestations of climate security in different countries of the region, with panelists providing examples of country-level response plans to climate security risks.

Under this segment, the Secretary-General of the Jordanian Ministry of Environment presented the impact of climate change in the Kingdom, including increased water scarcity, droughts, flash floods, dust storms, heatwaves and significant changes in land use as the key challenges that affect the welfare of communities. The Secretary-General also highlighted that Jordan has started integrating climate change considerations in immediate and long-term recovery plans through available tools such as, the national climate change policy, national climate change committee, and an early warning system for droughts and flash floods among others.



Another country example was presented by the Director General of the Department of Environment in Somalia, who stressed that poverty, climate shocks, conflict over natural resources, limited data and institutional capacities are the drivers of environmental degradation, and climate security risks in Somalia.

The second thematic question highlighted regional responses to address climate security. In this segment, the Arab Water Council (AWC) pointed out that by 2100 a rise in temperature of 4 °C is predicted in most Arab countries, while a 2°C rise will cause up to 40% of species in the region to go extinct. AWC also invited interested parties to join the Regional Climate Security Network, which was founded in 2020 by AWC, UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States, and the League of Arab States under the SDG-Climate Facility project. The network works towards creating an integrated, cross-sectoral, collaborative and proactive regional approach to climate security. It also works on advancing knowledge about climate security by supporting research and information gathering and sharing.

The final thematic question revolved around the necessary resources required for an integrated approach in addressing climate security, and an identification of the main players. Under this segment, the UN Environment Programme's Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) presented a recent report on Promoting Sustainable Finance and Climate Finance in the Arab region, the first in-depth analysis of sustainable financing practices in the region on climate-related issues and how to build resilient economies through adopting sustainable and climate finance models. The report provides an assessment of the readiness of the financial sector framework in the Arab region to integrate and promote sustainable finance in general, and climate finance in particular. This was followed by a presentation by UNDP SDG-Climate Facility project on the Arab Climate and Resilience Investment Forum which is planned to take place in the last quarter of 2021, and aims to provide an open platform for bankable projects and companies in the Arab states to pitch their business models and investment opportunities, meet potential investors, and exchange new ideas with peers and stakeholders. The forum targets sectors such as water resource management, waste management, climate-smart agriculture, centralized renewable energy, small scale off-grid renewable energy, sustainable housing for refugees and internally displaced persons, among other sectors.

The special session ended with four main takeaways:

- Climate Security is a new concept used to describe and understand the combined impacts of climate-related change as a risk multiplier on natural resources, ecosystems, socio-economic development, and political stability.
- A climate-security perspective and approach help to analyse the effects of converging factors such as food-security, water scarcity, conflict, gender, loss of livelihoods, and displacement on human security in an integrated manner.
- A multi-stakeholder solution is essential for this to benefit from the comparative advantages that each entity brings, while at the same time enabling coherence among the different types of knowledge, expertise, and data. Partnerships are therefore at the core of the response.
- Partnerships must also include integrated financing solutions, with investments in research and data development and uptake enabling innovative and business-oriented solutions. Public and private resources and investments are necessary to enable a comprehensive response to climate-security challenges in urban and rural settings.

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