

UNEP Regional Office for West Asia & UN-Habitat Regional Office of Arab States sign Letter of Agreement to work on promoting cities climate adaptation and green recovery and reconstruction

Manama, Cairo 24 August 2021 - The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for West Asia and UN-Habitat Regional Office of Arab States signed a Letter of Agreement (LoA) to join efforts to promote cities' climate adaptation and ecosystem restoration at the city level build capacity on green recovery and reconstruction and integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into recovery and reconstruction processes in conflict affected countries.

As projections of future climate change indicate that impacts are likely to increase in coming years in the Arab region, the LoA aims at exchanging expertise and knowledge to develop programmes and capacities for adaptation planning at the city and national level. Adaptation in urban and other temporary human settlements is key to ensuring decent standards of living, achieving Sustainable Development Goals, and avoiding potential conflict over resources in the future. The collaboration between UNEP and UN-Habitat regional offices will focus on promoting the adoption of integrated development policies and approaches to recovery and reconstruction planning.

Cities generate over 80 per cent of gross domestic product in many countries and are engines of economic growth that have lifted millions from poverty. Many Arab cities are already struggling with environmental degradation, traffic congestion, inadequate urban infrastructure, and a lack of basic services, such as water supply, sanitation, and waste management. Environmental footprints of cities are quite alarming and can threaten the natural resources required to sustain the economic development and poverty alleviation rates (UNEP). The LoA signature is timely to address those challenges and reflects both UN agencies' common priorities, mainly UNEP's role in mainstreaming the global environmental agenda within different sectors and UN-Habitat's role in promoting sustainable cities.

UNEP Regional Office for West Asia, represented by Regional Director and Representative Mr. Sami Dimassi, and UN-Habitat Regional Office of Arab States, represented by Dr. Erfan Ali, highlighted the importance of signing the LoA to promote sustainable cities and green recovery.

This collaboration also aims to produce joint publications on climate-resilient infrastructure in the Arab region that will help to identify key challenges of implementing resilient infrastructure and document lessons learned and best practices to promote capacity building and knowledge transfer.

From his side, Mr. Dimassi said that: "Strengthened cooperation between UNEP and UN-Habitat comes timely to promote actions within the region's efforts in building back better at cities level."

Dr. Erfan Ali said: "This is a critical moment to strengthen partnerships for the acceleration of SDGs' achievement and streamline efforts to address the region's most important environmental and social

challenges, the joint collaboration between UNEP and UN-Habitat is a significant step towards promoting inclusive, just, sustainable and resilient cities in the region.”

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About the UN Environment Programme (UNEP):

The UN Environment Programme is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

About the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat):

UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries supporting people in cities and human settlements for a better urban future. Working with governments and local partners, its high impact projects combine world-class expertise and local knowledge to deliver timely and targeted solutions. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a dedicated Goal on cities, SDG 11 – to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

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