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01 Foreword
Arab countries are witnessing a rapid pace of urban expansion and significant urban population growth. Climate change is the single biggest threat facing humanity today and rapid urbanization is exacerbating the vulnerability of urban dwellers, particularly the urban poor, to the impacts of disasters and climate change. The Sixth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change clearly stated that urbanization has exacerbated the effects of global warming in cities and future exposure to climatic hazards is expected to increase globally due to socio-economic development trends including migration, growing inequality and urbanization.

The MENA/Arab region is one of the most vulnerable regions of the world to the negative impacts of climate change. The increasing frequency of natural disasters and extreme weather events coupled with the social, political, and economic challenges of conflict, increasing poverty, urban expansion, and population growth continue to increase the vulnerability of the region. We are already witnessing the dire impacts on water scarcity, food security and human health, but these impacts are only a fraction of what future generations will have to confront if climate commitments are not turned into tangible actions.

The ways our cities are planned and managed contribute greatly to the level of greenhouse gas emissions. The dependency on fossil fuel for transport and power generation increases in tandem with the growth and expansion of cities. Our mission at UN-Habitat is to promote socially, economically and environmentally sustainable human settlements. This is a critical moment to mobilize our efforts, strengthen our partnerships and leverage innovative tools and approaches to build urban adaptation and climate resilience in hotspots of vulnerability and mainstream climate considerations into local and national urban policies and plans.

We, at UN-Habitat, believe that cities are pioneers in testing and implementing innovative, sustainable, and integrated climate solutions. Our Climate Change Strategy for the Arab Region (2022-2025) is grounded in UN-Habitat’s commitment to strengthen climate action, improve the urban environment, create sustainable and resource efficient cities, and support member states and local governments in their pathways towards the achievement of the SDGs, implementation of the New Urban Agenda and working towards the Paris Agreement. We hope that the strategy will serve as a guiding document for a collaborative, holistic and multi-sectoral approach to advance urban climate action in the Arab region.

Erfan Ali
Regional Representative, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States
The Climate Change Challenge in Urban Areas

Cities are the habitats of the future, currently housing more than 50 per cent of the world population, which is expected to rise to 70 per cent by 2050. In this era of the triple planetary crisis, cities bear a huge responsibility to both adapt to and mitigate climate change, and reverse biodiversity loss and pollution. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s 6th Assessment Report findings came as a warning of the eminent danger that faces humanity, clearly signalling that the time to act was a long time ago and now we are in a race of survival. Responsible for more than 60 per cent of Greenhouse Gas emissions, consuming 78 per cent of global energy while covering only 2 per cent of the planet’s surface area [1], cities are both the cause and the solution. Being immobile socio-economic centres, cities need to adapt and build resilience to climate change impacts and extreme weather events including heat waves, droughts, floods, sea-level rise, sand and dust storms, climate change-induced water scarcity, among others.

The New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, especially the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) in addition to other goals related to climate change, sustainable consumption and production, decent work and economic growth, and reducing inequalities, are the frameworks that guide UN-Habitat’s work on sustainable urban development.

In order to contribute to the battle against climate change, UN-Habitat aligns its efforts with international frameworks including the Paris Agreement’s goal of keeping global warming well-below 2°C and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Global and Regional Agendas

March, 2015
Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

It aims to achieve the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

October, 2015
Regional, Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)

The 3RP is a strategic, coordination, planning, advocacy, fundraising, and programming platform for humanitarian and development partners to respond to the Syria crisis.

June, 2016
Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030

The Strategy proposes a set of goals and targets to develop the sector of housing and other relevant sectors to achieve integrated, inclusive and sustainable urbanization at the Arab region.

September, 2015
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

UN-Habitat is the Custodian Agency for SDG-11 and is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities and communities.

December, 2015
Paris Agreement

The Agreement sets long-term goals to limit global warming to well below 2°C while pursuing efforts to limit the increase even further to 1.5°C, review countries' commitments every 5 years and provide financing to developing countries for climate mitigation and adaptation.

October, 2016
New Urban Agenda (NUA)

The NUA contains recommendations and commitments that can enable governments across the world to fight inequalities, achieve equitable low or net-zero urban transformations, and improve the quality of life for all.
Urban Realities and Challenges in the Arab Region

The Arab region is a rapidly urbanizing region with a population of 444.8 million inhabitants, of which 59 per cent live in urban areas [2]. These figures are expected to rise to 646 million inhabitants, of which 70 per cent will be living in urban areas by 2050 [3]. This rapid growth adds stress on the already limited resources in the region. The Arab region is classified as the most water scarce region in the world, where current water resources utilization rate is estimated at 76.6 per cent compared to a global average of 7.5 per cent [4]. Eighty five percent of water use in the MENA region is utilized by the agriculture sector [5], which implies a room for improvement through more efficient agriculture systems. Water scarcity is a major issue for 19 of the 22 Arab countries, with water availability already worsening due to the impacts of climate change, including changes in precipitation, and increases in temperatures. Seventeen countries in the region also suffer from desertification and land degradation.

On the city scale, the share of public spaces in Arab cities is only 2 per cent of total area as of 2016 compared to an average of 12 per cent in Europe [7]. Moreover, the majority of Arab cities lack access to some basic services including affordable public transport, efficient solid waste management, proper sanitation, among others.

In addition to the growing population and the limited resources stresses, the Arab region is characterized by a high level of ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises, where 58 per cent of world refugees originated from the region [6]. The region also hosts a large population of refugees and IDPs accounting to 9.3 per cent of the region’s population as of 2019 [7]. The majority of these refugees and IDPs end up living in vulnerable and underserved informal settlements or slums, which already account for an average of 30.9 per cent of urban dwellers with this figure varying greatly between countries in the region [8].

Environmental and Climate Change Challenges in the Arab Region

Most countries of the Arab region are among the least contributors to climate change, yet they will be among the hardest hit by its impacts. While the effects of climate change
vary from one country to another, there are some commonalities within a given region. The Arab region is already known for high temperatures, long summers, and water scarcity issues. Climate change and global warming are already worsening the situation with impacts on public health, water availability, ecosystem services degradation, agriculture, infrastructure, energy consumption, and economic activities. Extreme weather is currently more frequent in the Arab region, characterized by extreme temperatures and shorter but more intense precipitation periods [9].

Moreover, Arab countries are net food importers, with food imports accounting for 13% of total imports compared to the global average of 8% [10]. This is negatively affected by climate change impacts in exporting countries, as well as other geopolitical stressors. In addition to water shortages, desertification, land degradation, heatwaves and other climate change impacts, food security is being hit by several issues in the region including the tenure insecurity and increasing fragmentation of agricultural land holdings, the reliance on imports and urbanisation into agricultural lands. Moreover, similar to other coastal countries, Arab countries are at a high risk of flooding and saltwater intrusion especially in river deltas, due to sea-level rise, which will affect more than 43 port cities in the region.

All Arab countries suffer from air pollution according to the World Health Organization’s guidelines on particulate matter concentrations in the air, while 11 out of the 22 Arab countries exceed the world average of particulate matter concentration [11]. As a result, 5 Arab countries are ranked among the top 10 polluted countries worldwide and 3 Arab countries are among the top 10 countries with the most deaths from air pollution [8].

While the share of GHG emissions from the Arab region is considered low, CO2 emissions have increased by 81% between the years 2000 and 2014 [6]. Certain urban sectors are the cause of these emissions, for instance, 25% of CO2 emissions in the region are produced by the transport sector [8], where private vehicles are the main mode of transport. As for the housing and building sector, it accounts for around 20% of emissions [13].

The impacts of climate change manifest disproportionately on the different types of urban dwellers, with women, children, refugees, IDPs, and older persons being the most negatively affected.

International Climate Change Commitments in the Region

In terms of national-level climate change commitments, the majority of Arab countries have submitted their NDCs (16 countries) while 4 countries have submitted INDCs and only two countries (Libya and Yemen) with no official INDC or NDC submissions. UN-Habitat has provided support to NDCs update/development in Bahrain, and Lebanon. Moreover, UN-Habitat is committed to providing support to the development of National Adaptation Plans in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, with support already provided in Jordan and Palestine.
04 Call to Action

After view, improving the well-being of host and refugee populations through funding from SDC, Tripoli, Lebanon.
UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Under its current Strategic Plan 2020-2025, the vision of UN-Habitat is to achieve “a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world”. This vision is encapsulated in the Plan’s 4 domains of change namely:

1. Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban - rural continuum
2. Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions
3. Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment
4. Effective urban crisis prevention and response.

In the third domain of change, UN-Habitat is committed to support Member States in undertaking climate action and improving the urban environment. UN-Habitat is also committed to work together with its partners to mainstream environmental considerations into local, national, and regional urban policymaking and enhance awareness of climate change matters and disseminate knowledge and best practices to support the implementation of climate change strategies.

Three outcomes frame UN-Habitat’s Climate Change Strategy for Arab States:

1. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality
2. Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets
3. Effective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change

In 2021, UN-Habitat made a leap forward by introducing the third version of its Environmental Social Safeguard System (ESSS) as a tool to prevent and mitigate undue harm to people and the environment and maximize environmental and social benefits throughout the agency’s projects and programmes. The ESSS is currently streamlined in project and programme development and implementation.
### Objective
To curb the impact of climate change on Arab cities and communities through resilience building, reduction of urban vulnerabilities, advancing adaptation and mitigation actions for the development of sustainable cities and mainstreaming climate considerations in urban policies and plans.

### Thematic Areas

| Water Security | As the most water-stressed region in the world, the demand for urban water supply in the Arab region has grown steadily in the last decades. This is in addition to the higher frequency and intensity of floods and flash floods. UN-Habitat is committed to support urban water resilience through integrated water resources management, innovation in water technology, nature-based solutions and resilient infrastructure, and water-sensitive urban planning. |
| Green Reconstruction and Rehabilitation | Post-conflict and crises recovery and reconstruction could be seen as an opportunity to build back better, greener and more resilient. UN-Habitat is keen to leverage bespoke tools and approaches to support post-conflict and post-crises sustainable recovery and reconstruction in the built environment and mainstream climate considerations in the recovery and reconstruction processes. |
| Energy Transition and Energy Efficiency | UN-Habitat will continue to advocate for the adoption of renewable energy generation in urban areas, using solar rooftops on public buildings and in housing projects. UN-Habitat will also continue to support the shift to low-carbon, accessible, affordable and inclusive public transport, integrated with better facilities for walking and cycling. |
| Urban Resilience | UN-Habitat is committed to raising urban resilience and adaptive capacities of cities and communities. This includes designing and implementing urban nature-based solutions and green infrastructure; and reducing waste generation by reducing, reusing and recycling waste in an efficient and sustainable manner. |
| Sustainable Urban Food Systems | As food systems are under pressure in the Arab region, UN-Habitat is keen to better understand urban food systems and the interactions between all the components involved in the production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste of food and enhance urban-rural linkages to shorten supply chains. |
| Sustainable Land Management | Sustainable land management has a key role in climate change. Climate resilience is higher in communities with land tenure security and adequate housing. The good management of urban and peri-urban land prevents and addresses unregulated urban sprawl into agricultural land. UN-Habitat advocates for sustainable land management for compact development and the reduction of environmental impacts. |

### Cross-Cutting Themes:
Gender, Human Rights, Children, Youth and Older Persons and Disability
UN-Habitat is mandated to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. Given that climate change is both affected by and affects cities and urban areas, UN-Habitat integrates climate change issues in its response with projects either integrating climate change aspects or entirely focusing on adaptation and/or mitigation.

One of the five UN-Habitat Flagship programmes, the Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor (RISE UP) Flagship programme, focuses on urban adaptation and resilience-building in vulnerable informal settlements whose inhabitants are among the most susceptible to climate change. Other climate change initiatives for this Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs focus on accelerating local climate finance, providing policy advisory for multi-level climate action governance, and facilitating innovative solutions.

For more information on the Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor (RISE UP) Flagship programme, visit [https://unhabitat.org/programme/risa-up-resilient-settlements-for-the-urban-poor](https://unhabitat.org/programme/risa-up-resilient-settlements-for-the-urban-poor) or scan this QR code:
Previous and Current Climate Change Projects in the Region

- **Improving living conditions by promoting renewable energy in public and non-profit social and health institutions in the Greater Beirut metropolitan area**
  - **Budget**: USD 195K
  - **Donor**: Government of Poland
  - **2021 - 2022**

- **Strengthening the Social Stability and Resilience of Vulnerable Jordanian Communities and Syrian Refugees in Amman Against Flash Floods**
  - **Budget**: USD 978K
  - **Donor**: Government of Japan
  - **2016 - 2022**

- **Bike Sharing Model for Egyptian Youth**
  - **Budget**: USD 1.5 Million
  - **Donor**: Drosos Foundation
  - **2016 - 2023**

- **SDG-Climate Facility**
  - **Budget**: USD 7.1 million (UN-Habitat's share: USD 50,000)
  - **Donor**: SIDA
  - **2019-2022**

- **Capacity Building of National and LocalGovernments on Urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Arab Region**
  - **Budget**: USD 59,000
  - **Donor**: UNEP
  - **2022**
Greening Open Public Spaces of Kuwait cities to Mitigate the Effect of Climate Change and Improve the Cities Resilience

**Budget:** USD 100K  
**Donor:** Kuwait Oil Company  
**2019 - 2022**

Increasing the Resilience of both Displaced Persons and Host Communities to Climate Change-Related Water Challenges in Jordan and Lebanon

**Budget:** USD 14 million  
**Donor:** Adaptation Fund  
**2021-2025**

Improved Resilience to Transboundary Sand and Dust Storms in Kuwait and Iraq

**Budget:** USD 13.4 million  
**Donor:** KFAED  
**2021-2025**

Increasing the climate change resilience of communities in Eastern Ghouta in Rural Damascus to water scarcity challenges through integrated natural resource management and immediate adaptation interventions

**Budget:** USD 10 Million  
**Donor:** Adaptation Fund  
**2021-2025**

Strengthening Development Planning and Management in Greater Cairo (Mobility-Component 2 - Bus Rapid Transit)

**Budget:** USD 1.1 Million  
**Donor:** New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) & UN Women  
**2016 - 2022**

**Budget:** USD 1 million  
**Donor:** Government of Bahrain, Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning  
**2022-2023**

**Green and Healthy cities in Bahrain**

**Budget:** USD 1 million  
**Donor:** Government of Bahrain, Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning  
**2022-2023**

**Budget:** USD 1.1 Million  
**Donor:** New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) & UN Women  
**2016 - 2022**

**Budget:** USD 1.1 Million  
**Donor:** New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) & UN Women  
**2016 - 2022**
Future Proposals and Pipeline Projects

**Water Security**
- Strengthening sector capacity to assess and address the impacts of climate change on the provision of water and sanitation services and to build the project pipeline for water and sanitation projects in the Syrian Arab Republic

**Green Reconstruction and Rehabilitation**
- Transforming waste to energy
- Reducing emissions from the mobility and buildings sectors
- Increasing renewable energy sources in urban areas in Lebanese cities

**Energy Transition and Energy Efficiency**
- Tackling plastic waste in the Mediterranean Sea in Sousse/Monastir
- Integrating climate change into city planning
- Safe and reliable urban public transportation to decrease congestions and emissions from private vehicles

**Urban Resilience**
- Implementing the climate change plan of Djerba island
- Designing a Pilot Eco-Neighbourhood Project in the City of Tangier
- Improving the living conditions of rural households affected by climate change in the mountainous areas of the Fez-Meknes Region

**Sustainable Urban Food Systems**
- Strengthening Water-Food-Energy Nexus in Jordan
- Applying the City Resilience Profiling Tool at the local level in the West Bank and Gaza

**Sustainable Land Management**
- Plan, introduce, and systematically scale up green roofs and other forms of urban agricultural in Egyptian cities for city resilience, adaptation, mitigation, and green job creation.
Normative Measures to Support Implementation

**Data:** Contributing to the generation of region-specific climate change data, maps, guides, and tools to make policy recommendations and facilitating access to climate change data.

**Innovation:** Creating mediums and platforms for Innovation and technology transfer and fostering innovative solutions for urban and climate problems.

**Capacity Development:** Building capacities of government partners, especially on climate change related issues such as vulnerability assessment, climate fund acquisition, etc.

**Awareness raising:** Raising awareness of populations and sometimes governments on the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

**Mainstreaming climate change into policies and plans:** mainstreaming climate change into national policies and local plans as well as mainstreaming urban issues into climate change policies.
UN-Habitat has a strong presence in the Arab region with projects being implemented and policy advisory being provided in 18 countries. While UN-Habitat is physical present in 13 countries with country offices in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.

With pilot projects that can be replicated and scaled-up and regional frameworks through which urban recovery can be greener, UN-Habitat ROAS has established a base of best practices that can support climate change adaptation and mitigation in the region.

**Current Regional Climate Change Portfolio:**

$42.5M

(Note: This figure covers on-going programmes and projects primarily focusing on environment and climate change)
In addition to global initiatives and campaigns, UN-Habitat has developed climate change guides and tools that aim to support climate change stakeholders, including national government, local governments, urban planners, and climate change projects designers in their fight against climate change.

These include guides on how to integrate urban issues in NDCs and how to integrate climate action into NUPs. UN-Habitat is supporting the development and endorsement of NUPs in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Tunisia.

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**Best practices in the region**

- **Zero-Emission Mobility**
  - Introducing bikesharing systems involving smart solutions for operations and M&E of project performance and mitigation impact in Cairo, Egypt and Tyre, Lebanon

- **Rubble to Mountains Initiative**
  - In response to the Beirut port explosion, the initiative collected over 200,000 tons of rubble and glass
  - Reused and recycled to mend the Lebanese mountains, build furniture for Beirut’s public spaces and establish a permanent site for sustainable disposal and processing of C&D waste

- **Green Recovery and Reconstruction**
  - Application of Green Building concepts and technologies in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of buildings and public facilities in Iraq and Lebanon

- **Al Zohour Green Triangle**
  - Implementing a Nature-based Solutions pilot project to enhance the adaptive capacity of the city of Amman to flash floods through stormwater bioretention and detention

- **Green Public Spaces**
  - Designing and implementing green public spaces in more than 12 cities

- **Community-level Urban Farming**
  - Home farming initiative for elderly people in 60 vulnerable households in Palestine as a sustainable and organic source of food production and a coping strategy against COVID-19 restrictions

- **Green Public Spaces**
  - Designing and implementing green public spaces in more than 12 cities
### Global Initiatives and Campaigns

- **Cities and Climate Change Initiative (CCCI)**
- **Innovate 4 Cities (I4C) Campaign**
- **Climate Action 4 Cities Campaign**
- **Integrating Climate Change into City Development Strategies (CDS)**

### Knowledge Products, Guides, and Tools

- **Developing Local Climate Change Plans: A Guide for Cities in Developing Countries**
- **Gender and Urban Climate Policy**
- **Addressing Urban and Human Settlement Issues in National Adaptation Plans**
- **Guiding Principles for City Climate Action Planning (En-Ar)**
- **Pro-Poor Climate Action in Informal Settlements**
- **Land Tenure and Climate Vulnerability (GLTN, UN-Habitat, RMIT University in Melbourne Australia)**

### Multilevel Governance for effective urban related climate action in the Global South

### Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk: A Guide for Community Assessments, Action Planning and Implementation
Local Climate Action in the Arab region

Study on Land, Natural Resources and Climate Change in the Arab Region: Tenure Security Issues and Challenges

The Nexus Between Land Degradation and Land-Related Conflict

Master Tool on Climate Change: Flagship 3 RISE UP - Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor

City Resilience Profiling Programme: Climate Action Enhancer

Law and Climate Change Toolkit

Addressing Climate Change in National Urban Policy: A Policy Guide for Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Urban Development

Sustainable Reconstruction & Recovery Framework for The Southern & Eastern Mediterranean

Planning for Climate Change: A strategic, Values-based Approach for Urban Planners

Volume 1: Guide:

Volume 2: Toolkit:

Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions through Urban Climate Action (Guide)

Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Manual

Placemaking Toolkit: Designing People Places - A toolkit for communities and designers to design and implement public spaces and buildings in Palestine

City Resilience Action Planning Tool (CityRAP Tool)
Concerted efforts and strategic cross-sectoral partnerships are necessary for combating climate change. UN-Habitat ROAS aims to capitalize on its experience and successful partnerships with local and national governments in the region and collaborate with climate change stakeholders to support urban resilience, adaptation, and mitigation in the Arab region. Moreover, UN-Habitat intends to deliver the objectives of this strategy within the framework of One United Nations, in cooperation with all UN agencies concerned with climate action.

Through this strategy, UN-Habitat ROAS plans on strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones with all climate change stakeholders including local communities, academia, and international and local NGOs and CSOs.

**Financing the implementation of the Regional Climate Change Strategy**

Despite the increase in available finance for adaptation, the adaptation finance gap is still not closing. However, implementation of adaptation actions is increasing worldwide,
holders to ensure the successful implementation of the Regional Climate Change Strategy.

The implementation leading to the achievement of the strategy outcomes is estimated at USD 100 million. UN-Habitat will capitalize on its experience in mobilizing climate finance through different financial mechanisms and partnering with climate investors, both public and private. UN-Habitat will also ensure expanding resource mobilization to unconventional funding sources, such as foundations, the private sector, emerging donor countries and blended finance, and strengthening joint programming with UN organizations and leveraging partnerships with local and regional government and other development actors and stakeholders.

Key Climate Action Partners and Donors in the Region
A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world