

Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) 2009 Annual Conference: Impact of Climate Change on Arab Countries

Recommendations

The Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) held its second annual conference in Beirut on 19-20 November 2009, under the patronage of His Excellency the President of the Lebanese Republic General Michel Sleiman. The conference brought together 500 delegates from 22 countries, representing corporations, non-governmental organizations, academia, research institutions, and media. Ministers and representatives of government and international organizations participated as observers. Delegates deliberated the findings of the report issued by AFED on the Impact of Climate Change on Arab Countries.

The conference endorsed the following recommendations:

- 1- The conference agreed with the AFED Report that Arab countries are among the most vulnerable to the potential negative impacts of climate change, the most significant of which are water stress, decline in food production, sea level rise, loss of biodiversity, and worsening human health. It also agreed that there is lack of data bases and scientist teams specialized in climate change in the Arab countries.
- 2- Although the challenges are immense, virtually no concerted mitigation or adaptation efforts are being carried out to make Arab countries better prepared to address the climate change vulnerabilities discussed in the report.
- 3- The conference calls upon Arab governments to:
 - a) Endorse the 2007 Arab Ministerial Declaration and the 2009 Statement on Climate Change issued by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, and effect their realization by defining clear emission reduction targets and developing and implementing long-term national low-emission development plans to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change.
 - b) Create a strong national body, a Ministerial Committee or High Council, presided over by the Head of State or the Prime Minister, to endorse policies and ensure follow-up.
 - c) Create a technical council to provide climate change assessments and possible responses to the national body.

- d) Ensure that development plans take fully into account the impacts of climate change.
 - e) Make climate change a public policy issue to be addressed not only by environmental ministries and councils, but also by all relevant government ministries: agriculture, water resources, energy, electricity, planning, economy, public health, and tourism.
 - f) Devote more efforts and resources to monitor and assess climate change, including the establishment of monitoring stations, early warning systems, and research programmes in all sectors affected by climate change, and establish a regional center for coordination of research and scientific knowledge.
 - g) Use the planet's valuable and limited fossil energy resources in a sustainable manner, invest in technologies for cleaner use of conventional fuels, and set medium- and long-term programmes for energy efficiency and renewable energy including solar and wind, and guarantee that the production of biofuels does not jeopardize food security.
 - h) Formulate a clear Arab position at the international climate change negotiations to reach an effective post-Kyoto agreement that ensures that greenhouse gas emissions do not reach critical levels, implement the global pursuit of limiting global temperature increase to below 2°C, and assist developing countries, including Arab countries, to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change.
 - i) Integrate civil society (NGOs, academia, and the private sector) in national and regional climate change mitigation and adaptation planning and offer the right incentives to the private sector for implementing effective measures.
 - j) Develop and implement national public awareness campaigns to educate the public about climate change threats.
 - k) Train qualified technical teams to deal with climate change vulnerabilities, and establish a regularly updated database inventory of climate change research and studies conducted at national, regional and international levels.
- 4- The conference commends initiatives in some Arab countries to participate in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate climate change, such as Masdar zero carbon city in Abu Dhabi, the energy studies programme at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia, the commercialization of wind energy in Egypt, the widespread use of solar energy in Tunisia and Morocco, the pioneering carbon capture and storage facility in Algeria, and the introduction of duty and tax exemption in Jordan to encourage hybrid cars and other successful examples of energy efficiency. The conference recommends that these innovative initiatives be shared across the Arab countries.
- 5- The conference invites governments of the Arab countries to devote serious efforts and clear commitment to deal with the negative impacts of climate change on their priority areas: water resources, food production, coastal areas, infrastructure and buildings, biodiversity, tourism, and human health along the lines of the recommendations presented in the annual report on climate change.
- 6- The conference calls upon the civil society, mainly NGOs, academia and the private sector, to cooperate fully with Arab governments in the implementation of these recommendations.
- 7- The conference believes that the prerequisite for the implementation of its recommendations is securing a real political will at the highest leadership level in each Arab state to take climate change vulnerabilities seriously if we are to face up to the threats of its impacts.

- 8- The conference wishes to thank the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) for its constructive initiatives, and requests it present the annual conference's recommendations to all Arab governments and to the Copenhagen conference on climate change.
- 9- The conference invites the AFED Board of Trustees to consider means of following up the implementation of the annual conferences' recommendations, and to present the outcome at the third annual conference.
- 10- The conference expresses its deep gratitude to H.E. the President of Lebanon General Michel Sleiman for his patronage of the event. It offers its appreciation to the official sponsor Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi for its immeasurable support, OFID and all those who gave their support to the preparation of the annual report and the convening of this conference.