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## UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

### *Arab Region Joint Commitment to Accelerate Achievement of Water Security for Sustainable Development*

Friday, 24 March 2023, 9:30 – 10:45, Conference Room 6

Event ID HQ111

Organized by: League of Arab States (LAS) – Technical Secretariat of the Arab Ministerial Water Council, Ministers of the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)

#### **Background on the event (one paragraph)**

The Arab region is one of the most water scarce regions in the world with 19 States of the 22 below the water scarcity threshold. This is further complicated by a high proportion of transboundary waters resources, high population growth rates, climate change, inefficient use of water and occupation and conflict. The side event highlighted the Arab region's endeavours to adopt transformative commitments and build cross-sectoral partnerships to further strengthen collective action on water in the Arab Region. It also highlighted the commitments made to or to be made to the Water Action Agenda by Arab States and national and regional stakeholders, aiming to accelerate the implementation of the water goals, and improving water security in the water-scarce Arab region.

#### **Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))**

In addition to the Water Action Agenda commitments made by member states that participated in the side event, ESCWA & LAS announced the launch of the “Arab Initiative for Mobilizing Climate Finance for Water” in partnership with Islamic Development Bank and the Green Climate Fund as a Water Action Agenda commitment. The first activity of this initiative will be convening an Arab Climate Finance Forum for Water Action in 2023. This forum will build

upon the climate finance forum that ESCWA hosted in September 2022 with the Egyptian COP27 Presidency and the UN Climate Change High Level Champions.

### **Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)**

While all member states face distinct national challenges, there were several key cross cutting themes that were highlighted:

- The Arab region faces a profound challenge with respect to water scarcity in comparison to other regions globally. This will only be exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, which are also more pronounced in the Arab region than elsewhere.
- Several participating members described the impact of conflict, terrorism, and occupation on the water sectors in their respective nations. These challenges slow progress towards accomplishing water related SDGs.
- The need for more renewable and untraditional sources of water was mentioned on several occasions, emphasizing the possibilities presented by water treatment and desalination technologies in the region.
- Access to WASH facilities for all is an ongoing challenge, particularly for vulnerable populations such as the internally displaced by conflict and natural disasters. Nearly 50 million people lack access to basic drinking water in the Arab region.
- Lack of finance for the water sector was identified as a key challenge for many member states.

### **Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)**

- There is a need to continue to develop and expand upon non-traditional water resources—this includes desalination, rooftop rainwater harvesting, and wastewater treatment facilities.
- The Arab region should play a lead role in research and development on water related technologies, particularly with respect to increasing the supply of renewable and untraditional water resources. This a challenge that is particularly relevant for the region and its scientists should be champions of innovative research in this field.
- More climate finance needs to be channeled to the water sector as water is a key input across sectors and therefore a necessary component to achieving the SDGs.
- Opportunities to incorporate more private sector development in the water sector should also be explored; the launch of the “Arab Initiative for Mobilizing Climate Finance for Water” in partnership with Islamic Development Bank is one such example.
- Transboundary cooperation on water resources is essential in the Arab Region given the prevalence of transboundary water sources and the potential for competition and conflict where water resources are scarce.