

SPECIAL SESSION 1

UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration – What does it mean for our region.

Tuesday, 15 March 2022, 14:45 – 16:15 pm, Beirut time

Background

Co-led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to build a strong and wide-range global movement, the United Nations General Assembly announced 2021–2030 as the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (UNDR). The UN Decade aims to build a strong, broad-based global movement to ramp up restoration and prevent, halt and reverse degraded and destroyed ecosystems worldwide. It acts as a framework for action to “revitalize” existing environment-related international agreements and commitments and put the world on track for a sustainable future.

In the Arab region, ecosystems are under serious threat, adding to the already existing water scarcity, aridity, and land degradation. Fisheries in the region are often associated with the unsustainable use and depletion of marine resources. Climatic extremes - particularly drought, flash floods, sand and dust storms and the increasing frequency and intensity of forest and wildfires- in addition to conflicts and forced migration aggravate vulnerabilities of the ecosystems and weaken their role in sustaining the livelihoods of millions of people. Land degradation has reduced the potential productivity of soils by about a third over recent years, and the region lost 2.8 million ha of its forest cover during the last thirty years, equivalent to an annual loss of 95,000 ha. Thus, the need to adopt long-term policies and strategies for ecosystem restoration in the region is of paramount importance.

Objectives

- Increasing awareness and understanding of the multiple benefits of ecosystem restoration and application in sustaining livelihoods in the Arab region and reporting on the costs to the region if no action is taken.
- Discussing what the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration means for the Arab region in terms of development of an action plan as well as expectations of countries to play a leading role in mobilizing all relevant stakeholders to prevent, halt and reverse degraded and destroyed ecosystems at the national and regional levels.

Moderator(s)

- **Ms. Aseel Al Mukhaimer**, Projects Manager at JOHUD, Jordan

Panelists

- **H.E Professor Ibrahim Adam El Dukheri**, Director-General of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, Sudan
- **H.E Dr. Naser Eddin Al Obaid**, Director-General of The Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD), Syrian Arab Republic
- **Dr. Maya Nehme**, Director of the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI), Lebanon
- **Dr. El Mostafa Darfaoui**, Independent International Consultant, Rangeland, Natural Resources and Environment, Kingdom of Morocco

This Special Session will be organized virtually and hosted through Zoom. Please register in advance on [this link](#). In-person participants of AFSD can attend the discussion in Committee Room 1.

Questions to be addressed

1. What are the key elements that need to be considered for developing a Regional Action Plan for implementing the UN Decade?
2. What are the global and regional best practices for ecosystem restoration that can be adopted in the Arab Region?
3. What are the importance and benefits of the UN-Decade on ecosystem restoration for the Arab countries and what are the enabling policies, institutions, capacity and incentives?
4. What are the supportive policies, opportunities and technical constraints facing implementation of The UN Decade in the Arab region?