



وزارة البيئة والمياه والزراعة
Ministry of Environment Water & Agriculture

المملكة العربية السعودية Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



الهيئة العامة للأرصاد وحماية البيئة
The General Authority Of Meteorology and Environmental Protection

Under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI
and the effective presidency of H.R.H Princess Lalla Hasnaa

7th Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers

"Towards an Effective Islamic Cooperation to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals"

Rabat Declaration

Islamic Declaration on Environment Protection and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

ISESCO Headquarters, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco
5 Safar 1439 A.H / 25 October 2017

Rabat Declaration on Environment Protection and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

We, the Ministers in charge of the environment and sustainable development issues in the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), taking part in the 7th Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, held in Rabat, capital of the Kingdom of Morocco, on 5 Safar 1439 A.H corresponding to 25 October 2017, under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, and the effective presidency of H.R.H Princess Lalla Hasnaa, President of the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection, on the theme: **“Towards An Effective Islamic Cooperation to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals”**;

Being guided by the royal message, which His Majesty King Mohammed VI, May Allah preserve him, addressed to the Conference as a reference document;

Based on the resolutions of the previous sessions of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, respectively in 2002 and 2006; Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, in 2008; Hammamet, Republic of Tunisia, in 2010; Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan, in 2012; and Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, in 2015;

Pursuant to the decisions of the Fourth Meeting of the Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment, held at ISESCO headquarters in Rabat, on 12-13 Shaaban 1438 A.H, corresponding to 9-10 May 2017;

Recalling the General Framework of the Islamic Agenda for Sustainable Development (GFIASD) as issued by the First Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, and its amended versions of 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2015;

Recalling the Conference’s commitment to the international agreements and the regional conventions and outputs, in particular the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit (1992), and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002); **and based on the OIC Ten-Year Programme** and the efforts of ISESCO and OIC-affiliated institutions towards fulfilling sustainable development programmes and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals;

Based on the civilizational perspective resting on the preservation of Man’s dignity and fulfillment of *Allah’s Lieutenancy on Earth* through good and constructive action, **while being inspired** by the universal principles codifying the collective responsibility towards the environment; which constitute the reference framework for achieving sustainable

development and anchoring the values of integration and welfare as a legacy handed down through succeeding generations; **and being conscious** of the importance of the environment and environmental resources as a universal asset and a prerequisite for sustainable development;

Considering that the increasing pressure on natural resources, especially water, along with the spread of desertification claiming more fertile and arable land, low-lying coastal areas affected by rising sea levels, flow of salty seawater into coastal freshwater aquifers, represent together the main manifestations of environmental degradation in the Islamic world;

Taking into account the growing phenomenon of disasters, natural and anthropogenic alike, coupled with air, water and marine pollution, which bears negatively on the lives of millions of people, along with the increasing rates of poverty, illiteracy, population growth and unemployment, and the growing debt burden among other challenges that are causing more difficulties to states in terms of social, economic and environmental governance;

Recognizing that the degradation and over-exploitation of the environment have become pressing issues of today's world, that thwart joint action for sustainable development; **taking into account** the various dimensions of the complex environmental crisis and its intricate character in connection with sustainable development; **warning against** the excessive and abusive use of environmental resources, which disrupts the balance of the foundations of sustainable development; **and being cognizant** of the serious threats such impacts pose to the safety and stability of people and property;

Building on the relevant international and regional instruments, such as the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region (2002) and the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the outcomes of Rio+20, the Agenda 21 regarding conservation and management of resources for development, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change along with the Kyoto Protocol and all the commitments ensuing therefrom; in addition to the conferences and summits held under the auspices of the United Nations and the competent Arab and Islamic organizations which sought to define a comprehensive vision for the issues of the environment and sustainable development, on top of which are the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals;

Considering the achievements of the Conference of the Parties on climate change, starting with the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in 2015 and the subsequent endeavor to guarantee a concrete implementation at the COP22 in Marrakesh in 2016, **appreciating** of the Conference's initiative to secure renewed political commitment to the requirements of international cooperation in the field of climate change, and ensure sustainable development at all levels, and **taking into account** the prospects for joint action as part of the agenda of the COP23 conference to be held in Bonn, Germany, in November 2017; and

Seeking to reiterate the importance of committed engagement in international joint action, especially in such a multifaceted field as the environment and sustainable development where multiple approaches, methods and means of action are at play,

Declare as follows:

1. **Stress** the importance of a renewed engagement by the Member States to supporting the international agenda for sustainable development, in accordance with the regionally and internationally agreed principles and instruments, in order to channel all national and international efforts into sustainable development, while taking into account the importance of mustering political will as a precondition to any progress in this connection, focusing more on filling the existing gaps by honoring the financial and technical commitments, establishing national structures for sustainable development or strengthening those existing in every Member State to implement sustainable development plans and programmes, upholding them with internal follow-up bodies to optimize implementation, and involving civil society organizations and the private sector in the implementation of sustainable development plans, given their crucial role in this regard.
2. **Commend** the effective contribution of the UN environmental bodies and the Arab and Islamic specialized organizations to supporting the efforts of the Member States in the relevant areas, with a view to implementing sustainable development projects, and **urge** the international community to take concrete steps to ensure debt cancellation, easy access to markets, technology transfer and capacity building.
3. **Call for** enhancing the existing international institutional framework relating to the environment and sustainable development, adopting a comprehensive and integrated perspective on sustainable development, which encompasses all human rights in terms of equality, cultural rights and disparity reduction, among others, in a bid to preserve the universal cultural, civilizational and religious heritage. We also **call on** the United Nations agencies and regional and international organizations to regularly revise the relevant international covenants and instruments in order to enable all States to address the pressing social, economic and environmental challenges of sustainable development.
4. **Call for** concerted efforts by the international community in order to put an end to occupation and civil wars in a number of Member States, together with all the consequent damage to the environment and sustainable development infrastructure, the increasing numbers of refugees and the displaced, and the destruction of historical monuments and civilizational and cultural heritage, based on fair principles of joint action in accordance with Principle 23 of the Rio Declaration, which specifically states that the environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected, bearing in mind the unfeasibility of sustainable development in the absence of security, peace and stability.

5. **Emphasize** the necessity for activating the recommendations of the Paris and Marrakesh Conferences of the Parties on climate change, particularly as regards the support funds as part of North-South solidarity to address the effects of this phenomenon, and **underscore** the need for developed countries to assume their environmental responsibilities, take resolute measures in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, and pay more attention to the degradation of biodiversity and natural habitat around the world, which causes even more economic loss than global warming according to UN relevant reports, through managing water and air pollution and disposal of dangerous pollutants in watercourses, as they lead to water depletion and disrupt biodiversity.
6. **Call on** the United Nations institutions and the relevant regional and international organizations, particularly the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), development banks, donors and national, regional and global funds to support the Executive Plan for the Implementation of ISESCO's Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, which aims to strengthen Islamic countries' capacity for disaster reduction and recovery; improve understanding of risks and ensure access to data; promote disaster risk funding and insurance strategies.
7. **Adopt** the "Guidance Document on Green Cities and their Role in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals", and **launch** the "Programme for the Celebration of Islamic Capitals of the Environment and Sustainable Development" to be supervised by ISESCO, in addition to a prize dedicated to green cities as a fifth category of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Award for Environmental Management in the Islamic World, chaired by the General Authority of Meteorology and Environmental Protection and whose General Secretariat is entrusted to ISESCO.
8. **Emphasize** the necessity to adopt green economy as a mechanism of sustainable development and ensure a smooth transition to it, particularly in the context of poverty eradication and institutional upgrading of Member States' economies, bearing in mind that poverty reduction and improved income distribution are among the most important economic goals advanced by Islam, and **call for** a dynamic interaction between socio-economic processes and environmental priorities within the framework of the Islamic concept of sustainable development which guarantees the rights of present and future generations.
9. **Underline** the importance of developing strategies and policies to guarantee energy sustainability as a key driver for accomplishing economic and human development, improving living conditions and basic services, and achieving human development through education and training in the different areas, while promoting scientific research in energy efficiency and renewable energy technology, together with the transfer of expertise in technological and industrial areas and promotion of the use of new technologies in energy operating systems.

- 10. Affirm** the importance of the “green jobs” opportunities that green economy creates in many economic sectors, such as renewable energy generation, energy efficiency, ecosystem rehabilitation and protection, ecotourism, waste management and other sectors that can contribute to reducing youth unemployment. In this context, there is need to develop policies to support small and medium enterprises –considered as a major generator of job opportunities – to help them cope with the demands of green economy, given its potential for poverty reduction, especially in rural areas, through preserving natural resources and optimizing their utilization in agricultural and non-agricultural income-generating activities, and accordingly reducing rural exodus and improving livelihoods in local communities.
- 11. Stress** the vital importance of water to sustainable development processes, environmental protection, food security, poverty eradication and transition to green economy, and its indispensable character for human health and well-being, and **call for** increased awareness about the pressure on fresh water resources, which might result in crises between Member States and between countries with shared trans-boundary resources.
- 12. Renew** our commitment to improving the water situation in the Member States and taking more technical and legal practical measures under the Strategy for Management of Water Resources in the Islamic World, the OIC Water Vision 2025, and the programmes of action of the OIC Water Council established by the OIC Water Ministerial Conference. We also **recommend** enforcing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification.
- 13. Reaffirm** that the water issue is inextricably linked to food security which is a real concern in the majority of Member States, amid a context marked by rapid degradation of soils, freshwater, oceans, forests and biodiversity, and growing pressure of climate change on available resources, which requires a profound change in the structure of joint action dedicated to the food and agriculture system in such a way as to feed the ever-increasing numbers of people suffering from food shortage in the various Member States.
- 14. Emphasize** the need to raise awareness about the importance of eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development goals, based on capacity building and human resources upgrading through education, training and development of skills, while opting for the most economically and technically appropriate applications and projects to eradicate poverty under all its forms, and encouraging cooperation between all stakeholders inside and outside the Member States for the implementation of comprehensive programmes to this end as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

- 15. Propose** taking concrete measures to address the consequences of population growth in the Member States, despite the decreasing trend registered at the global level, by focusing on awareness-raising, education of women and girls, and raising awareness about the importance of family affairs management, child care and population growth control; and **warn against** the precarious health conditions in poor and marginalized areas, deteriorating sanitation services, escalating pollution and lack of waste management practices, the steadily rising rural exodus and the rapid unplanned urbanization and its impacts on the quality of the population environment in cities.
- 16.** Invite the competent parties in the Member States, the Chair of the Conference and ISESCO to monitor the implementation of these commitments, guidelines and recommendations, in collaboration and coordination with the relevant parties.