Report of the Third Meeting of the Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment

6th Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers
«Climate Change: Future Challenges for Sustainable Development»

ISESCO Headquarters, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco,
Zul-Hijja 1437H / 8-9 October 2015
1. The Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment (IEBE) held its third meeting on 15 Shaaban 1436 A.H. / 3 June 2015 at the Rabat-based Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

2. The opening session was held with the presence of H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); H.E. Dr Abdulaziz bin Omar Al-Jasser, General President of Meteorology and Environment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (PME), President of the Fifth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers (ICEM), Chair of the Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment; H.E. Mrs Hakima El Haite, Minister Delegate for Environment to the Minister of Energy, Mining, Water and Environment in Morocco; H.E. Dr Refat Alfaouri, Director General of the Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO); along with their excellencies the members of the IEBE, a host of Islamic countries’ ambassadors in Rabat, and the representatives of a number of Arab, regional and international organizations dedicated to environment and sustainable development issues.

3. The Bureau opened with recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, followed by a keynote speech by ISESCO Director General Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, wherein he welcomed the Bureau’s members, thanking them for accepting the invitation to take part in the meeting and wishing them full success in pursuing the Bureau’s mission to help promote joint Islamic action in this vital area because of its direct positive impact on sustainable comprehensive development in the Islamic world. In this connection, he explained that among the important tasks assigned to the Bureau in its third meeting was to prepare for the sixth session of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers (ICEM-6), which will take place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on 8-9 October 2015, in association between ISESCO and Saudi Arabia’s General Presidency of Meteorology and Environment, and in coordination with the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

4. He went on, "We hope the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers will be a significant milestone event in advancing joint Islamic action on the environment, and an opportunity to assess and review the progress we have made in this area from the first session held in Jeddah 2002 to the fifth session held in Astana in 2012." The Conference, the Director General added, is sure to provide a platform for a fresh start with new mechanisms and an innovative approach, drawing both on the key documents adopted at the previous five sessions and on those to be examined at this meeting prior to their submission to the Conference for final decision. Agenda items of the IEBE’s third meeting featured: the “Draft Document on Environment Governance for Environment Sustainability in the Islamic World”, the “Draft Updated Version of the Strategy for Integrated Water Management in the Islamic World”, the “Draft Updated Version of the General Framework of the Islamic Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the “Progress report on the establishment of the Islamic Academy for the Environment and Sustainable Development”, and the “Project for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Award for Environment Management in the Islamic World”.

5. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri concluded by congratulating the laureates of the KSA sixth annual prize for environmental management. He also underscored the importance of the Prize and Saudi Arabia’s continued support for joint action on the environment at Arab and Islamic levels.

6. Speaking to the IEBE, Morocco’s minister delegate in charge of the environment, H.E. Mrs Hakima El Haite, focused on the need to develop harmonious and coordinated policies involving all Islamic world countries, and accelerate the transition toward green economy for the protection of the environment. She also pointed out that Morocco’s constitution of 2011 stresses the importance to create enabling conditions for sustainable development and full enjoyment of the right to living...
in a safe environment. In this regard, the minister explained that Morocco has incorporated green economy into its plan for economic development, and that it is planning to create 250,000 new green economy jobs by 2030.

7. For his part, H.E. Dr Abdulaziz bin Oma Al-Jasser, President of Meteorology and Environment of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the IEBE, underscored the attention given by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to environmental issues not only in the interest of Arab and Islamic countries but also the world over. He also stressed the role of the KSA Prize for Environmental Management as an instrument to support academic and practical measures for environment conservation and sustainable development, and called for setting up a model for joint Islamic action and cooperation on the environment, in fulfilment of the mission Allah willed for Man on earth. We need to contribute effectively through joint Islamic action to the wider global effort and influence global decisions regarding environmental conservation and sustainability, he further emphasized.

8. At the close of his speech, Dr Al-Jasser invited the Member States taking part in the environmental management prize-giving ceremony, organized alongside the IEBE’s third meeting, to incorporate the decisions and recommendations of the previous sessions of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers and provide the resources and means necessary for the Prize’s managing committee to best fulfil its mission.

9. The award ceremony for this year’s KSA environmental management Prize, organized alongside the IEBE meeting, featured a documentary about the prize, followed by an introductory speech by Prize secretary Dr Refat Alfaouri, Director General of ARADO. Also during the prize ceremony, a tribute was paid to the PME Vice-President for Environmental Affairs and Sustainable Development and the members of the Prize’s managing committee. In addition, the PME Shield was presented to the Directors General of ISESCO and ARADO.

10. Also significant, the IEBE closed its opening session with a signing ceremony of a partnership agreement between ISESCO and the PME in relation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prize for Environmental Management in the Islamic world.

11. The plenary session was started with the election of the Vice-chairperson and Rapporteur, as follows:
   • Vice-chairperson: Republic of Niger.
   • Rapporteur: People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

12. The draft agenda and draft programme for the IEBE’s third meeting were adopted.

13. Deliberations continued with the approval of other agenda documents, including the “Progress Report on ISESCO’s Activities in the Field of Sustainable Development since the 5th Session of the ICEM”. The meeting adopted the report subject to the inclusion of the observations of the IEBE members, commending the efforts exerted by ISESCO in implementation of the Islamic agenda for sustainable development and inviting it to carry on and further strengthen related programmes and activities, especially on climate change, green economy, water security, renewable energy, disaster management and poverty alleviation. The IEBE also stressed the need to urgently and effectively address challenges stemming from climate change and environmental degradation and proposed to discuss the Islamic vision for climate change and reflect it in the declaration of the Sixth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers with reference to the Islamic world’s participation in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris in December 2015. In addition, the Bureau commended Saudi Arabia’s role in furthering the Islamic agenda for sustainable development.
and providing the financial means necessary to successfully organize the meetings of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers and the Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment.

14. The IEBE also adopted the “Environmental Governance for Environmental Sustainability in the Islamic World” document subject to the inclusion of the observations of its members. On this matter, the Bureau urged the Member States to further measures for environment governance promotion, ensure implementation of national sustainable development policies, strategies and environment legislation and examine the possibility of signing cooperation conventions with national, regional and international research institutions specialized in governance – such as the Institute for Research on Governance (IRG); the Forum for New World Governance (FnWG) and others –, in line with their specificities and needs. The Bureau also commended the role of UN environment-focused agencies, stressing the need for them to assist the OIC Member States, technically and materially, in carrying out sustainable development projects. It also recommended the development of a set of standards of good sustainable governance practices adapted to the socioeconomic and cultural context of OIC Member States, the aim being to enable them to evaluate and control environmental action and to compare inter-country environmental situations.

15. Further, the Bureau adopted the (Updated Version of the Strategy for Integrated Management of Water Resources in Islamic World) subject to the inclusion the observations of its members. It went on to call on the Member States to affirm commitment with regard to promoting water security, developing mechanisms for rational and sustainable water management, building on gains and adjusting institutional and regulatory structures to make up for deficits and address adverse effects of unsound management of water resources in the wider Muslim world.

In the same vein, the Bureau recommended strengthening and modernizing water quality and quantity measurement networks, observatories and water data systems to ensure availability and access of reliable and relevant information to all water management stakeholders, to support decision tools.

It also invited ISESCO and the OIC to prepare a framework to harmonize the work pursuant to the (OIC Water Vision – Working Together for a Water Secure Future) and the (Strategy for Integrated Management of Water Resources) toward greater synergy for water security across the Muslim world.

Finally, it recommended the adoption of the Strategy’s updated version document by the Sixth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers.

16. The Bureau carried on deliberations with the adoption of the (Draft General Framework of the Islamic Agenda for Sustainable Development –Updated Version) subject to the inclusion the observations of its members. As well as expressing appreciation for the measures taken by the Member States, as per their capacities and priorities, to follow up the UN Agenda 21 Programme of Action for Sustainable Development, in line with the internationally agreed principles and instruments, the Bureau suggested adopting the “Common But Differentiated Responsibility” principle and working jointly or separately for the implementation of the (Future we Want) outcome document adopted at Rio+20. Recommendations included the establishment of a common OIC Commission for Sustainable Development (OIC-CSD), similar to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), with as a mandate to steer cooperation toward a more sustainable development among the Member States and promote the Muslim world’s vision regarding sustainable development at the UN and at regional and international forums and conferences dedicated to environmentally sustainable development.
Equally, the Bureau expressed appreciation for the existing cooperation and collaboration among the Member States on arriving at a common declaration with consensus under the Framework of the Islamic countries’ participation in international environment summits and other events and also suggests to raise a common and united voice on Islamic perspectives on climate change at the future climate change negotiations, especially during COP21 in Paris in December 2015.

17. The (Progress Note on Establishing the Islamic Academy for the Environment and Sustainable Development) was another document the IEBE approved subject to the observations of its members. In this connection, the Bureau thanked the Kingdom of Morocco for the land plot allotted for this major developmental project and for the technical measures taken so far. It also invited Morocco to reconfigure the project and develop a comprehensive work plan and submit it to the Sixth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers for approval.

18. Also, the IEBE adopted the (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prize for Environmental Management in the Islamic World) project with the goal to bolster the Islamic perspective of environment and contribute to safeguarding natural resources and clean environment for present and future generations. The Bureau also expressed deep gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for establishing the Prize to consolidate the broad concept of environment management and foster sustainable development in the Arab countries, and placed on record its appreciation for the technical support and secretarial services provided by ARADO for the management of the Prize. To this end, ISESCO and Saudi Arabia Presidency of Meteorology and Environment were commissioned by the Bureau to prepare a joint and coordinated document on the (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prize for Sustainable Environment Management for Muslim World) and submit it to the Sixth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers for approval. The two institutions were also asked to prepare a joint framework for the implementation of the project, with ISESCO taking on secretarial and technical measures for the announcement and conferral of the Prize. In the same vein, the Bureau welcomed the signing, by ISESCO and the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment of Saudi Arabia, of a partnership agreement regarding the KSA Prize for Environmental Management, and asked the Director General of ISESCO to take the measures needed to present submit this document to the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers in its sixth sessions.

19. The Bureau also adopted the draft agenda of Sixth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers (attached herewith), and agreed that it be held on 8-9 October 2015 at ISESCO Headquarters in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco. It also invited the OIC General Secretariat and ISESCO to prepare a draft document on the Muslim world’s strategic vision for climate change to be presented to the Paris conference on climate (COP21).

20. In conclusion, the Bureau addressed a message of gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, expressing appreciation for the unflinching support given both to the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers and the IEBE and to ISESCO in its efforts to foster joint Islamic action for the environment. The message also commended His Majesty’s support for the (Establishment of an Islamic Academy for the Environment and Sustainable Development), a project initiated by Morocco with the purpose to boost joint Islamic action and Islamic solidarity in all fields.

21. Another message of gratitude and appreciation was addressed by the Bureau to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in acknowledgement of the continued support given by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers and the IEBE and for his approval to enlarge scope for the KSA Environment Management Prize to cover the wider Islamic world and raise the Prize value to help boost research on environment and foster joint Islamic environmental action.