

## MENACW 2022 THEMATIC SESSIONS

### Affiliated event (open event)

*“Dialogue on Water Scarcity and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Development in the MENA region”*

*Organizer:* International Organization for Migration (IOM)

*Date and time:* Day 2, 29 March 2022, 14.00-16.00 (GST time)

*Venue:* Atlantis, The Palm, Dubai, United Arab Emirates / Room capacity: 100 pax

### CONCEPT NOTE

#### Description of the event

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) faces a complex set of interconnected challenges and is particularly exposed to the adverse effects of climate change. The region is already the most water-scarce region in the world, with over 60% of its population living in areas with high water stress. Regional water scarcity is the result of diverse factors, including climate change leading to rising temperatures, droughts, floods, saltwater intrusion into freshwater, diminished river flows and limited groundwater resources. While 56% of the region’s population lives in cities, the agriculture remains a critical source of income and employment and the sector consumes 80% of current available freshwater resources.

Today, war, conflict, and unemployment are more influential drivers of migration and displacement in the MENA region than events related to water, such as drought. But as the effects of climate change intensify, these historical mobility patterns may evolve. In areas that lack good governance, climate change could exacerbate vulnerabilities and create tensions over water resources, leading to a vicious cycle of water insecurity and fragility. Water insecurity is felt most acutely by the millions of forcibly displaced and their host communities. Water infrastructures are also targeted in conflicts in Gaza, Yemen, Syria, and Libya, leaving hundreds of thousands without access to water. The region also faces the greatest expected economic losses from climate-related water scarcity, estimated between 6 and 14% by 2050.

Several MENA countries have improved access to water services over the last decades, but their achievements are threatened by water depletion, unplanned urban expansion, governance issues, conflict and the impacts of climate change. Water shortages will contribute to seriously affect food security and livelihoods of millions of people in the region, to compound existing security challenges and to exacerbate the causes of migration and displacement<sup>4</sup>. Water scarcity will also threaten the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, the long-term socio-economic development and stability of the region.

Building water security in the MENA region is essential to strengthen the resilience of communities across the region to climate-related shocks, through addressing their ability to immediately respond to extreme weather events, whilst decreasing their long-term vulnerability to climate variability through preparedness and adaptation. Increased cooperation and dialogue between humanitarian, security, peace and development actors is also needed to respond to the multiplying effects climate change might have on already existing conflicts, water disputes, instability and displacement in the MENA region and to better protect and assist migrants, forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

This event will discuss the complex and interconnected challenges of climate change, water, displacement, migration and conflict in the MENA region, the most recent findings of IPCC AR 6 report and will call for increased attention and investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, water governance and sustainable development measures to reduce related risks in the region.

### **Objectives**

This event will bring together international and regional policymakers, practitioners and experts, to discuss the aggravating impacts of climate change on the water crisis and how it interacts with migration and displacement patterns. Participants will be invited to share good practices and lessons learnt from studies, projects and initiatives. The event will also identify research and policy gaps, and will discuss existing policy options in the region to address these issues. It will call for a shift from a focus on short-term humanitarian support to longer-term interventions and measures in the field of sustainable development, climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction and water management, to respond to the protracted displacement and water crises in the region and strengthen the resilience of communities to future climate-related shocks. The event will also promote the role vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, can play in contributing to climate action, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, resource management and conflict resolution. Finally, the event will constitute an opportunity to make a bridge between the 9th World Water Forum that will take place from 21 to 26 March 2022 and the MENA Climate Week and to bring forward the recommendations formulated during the World Water Forum to better take the migration-water nexus in the context of rural development and the recommendations made in the IPCC AR 6 report.

### **Expected outcomes**

The event will attempt to achieve the following outcomes:

- A better understanding of how climate change and water scarcity affect migration and displacement patterns in the MENA region, and of how these patterns also impact the availability, quality and sharing of water resources in the region considering the most recent scientific evidence presented at the IPCC RA6 report.
- Showcasing projects and initiatives addressing water crisis, instability and displacement in the MENA region, and identify good practices, opportunities and challenges in their implementation.

- Accelerate collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors to address these pressing challenges and foster ambitious climate action, sustainable development and stability.
- Incorporate water scarcity as a priority component in climate related policy and financing for the MENA region, and promote the inclusion of the water-migration nexus in the climate discussions at COP27.
- Engage with water users associations, women, youth and relevant civil society actors in the development and implementation of solutions to address water challenges in the region.

### **Format**

The event will take place in person at the Atlantis in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. It will be held in English and no simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

## PROGRAM

MENA Climate Week Affiliated Event:

*“Dialogue on Water Scarcity and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Development in the MENA region”*

**14.00-14.10 – Introductory remarks by the moderator** - Manuel Marques Pereira, Head of Migration, Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, IOM, Geneva

**14.10-14.20 - Opening remarks** – Ovais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC (TBC)

**14.20 – 15.20 - Panel discussion** – Understanding and addressing the nexus between water scarcity, climate change and human mobility in the MENA region

- Dr. Luis Augusto Becerra Lopez-Lavalle, Chief Scientist, International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA)
- Dr. Emad Adly, General Coordinator of RAED “Arab Network for Environment and Development”
- Rania Ahmed, Deputy Regional Director, MENA, IFRC
- Pr. Thanasis Hadzilacos, Adjunct Professor, The Cyprus Institute
- Eng. Heba Al Hariry, BSc., MSc., Advisor (Water and Disaster Risk Reduction), United Nations
- Sayeed Mohammed, Director, Knowledge, Policy and Strategy, Arab Youth Climate Movement Qatar

**15.20 – 15.40 – Q&A session**

**15.40 – 15.50 - Closing remarks 1** - Representative of the Water and Climate Coalition - Dr. Mohamed Abdel Aty, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt (TBC)

**15.50 – 16.00 – Closing remarks 2** - Caroline Dumas, DG Special Envoy on Migration and Climate Action, IOM