

Preface

Impact of Climate Change on the Arab Countries is the second of a series of annual reports produced by the Arab Forum for *Environment and Development (AFED)*. The first AFED report, published in 2008 under the title *Arab Environment: Future Challenges*, covered the most pressing environmental issues facing the region, and went beyond to provide a policy-oriented analysis. The report was presented to AFED's annual conference which convened in Manama in October 2008. That conference decided on a set of recommendations that were endorsed by national and regional institutions. The report's findings helped to raise awareness across the region, and its recommendations resonated in policies and official positions.

The 2009 AFED report has been designed to provide information to governments, business, academia and the public about the impact of climate change on the Arab countries, and encourage concrete action to face the challenge. The report analyzes the Arab response to the urgent need for adaptation measures, and uses the latest research findings to describe the vulnerabilities of natural and human systems in the Arab world to climate change and the impacts on each sector of human activity. The systems selected for this study include: coastal areas, food production, fresh water, human health, bio-diversity, in addition to the consequences on housing, transport, and tourism. In an attempt to help shape adequate policies, the report discusses options for a post-Kyoto regime and outlines the state of international negotiations in this regard.

AFED reveals in the report the findings of a pan-Arab opinion survey it conducted in 2009, illustrating public attitudes regarding climate change. Another special feature is a study carried out for AFED by the Center of Remote Sensing at Boston University, which analyzes various scenarios of impacts of climate change, especially on coastal areas, based on space images of the region.

The report identifies the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the Arab world, found to contribute merely 4.2% to the global emissions. However, the impact of climate change on the fragile environment of the region and its people is expected to be immense, which demands urgent planning for adaptation measures.

Climate change acts directly to change natural weather patterns, but the effects cascade quickly through many sectors. Scarcity of food and water, loss of coastal areas, disruption to ecosystems, and adverse effects on human health are just some of the direct threats. The economic sector is not immune and disruptions to infrastructure and tourism, for example, could conceivably cancel their economic benefits. For this reason, governments of the region have a large stake in making adaptation a national priority.

If this report can inform and help shape public policy in the Arab world on climate change, then it would have served its purpose. We also hope that the report would provide policy options which will assist Arab countries to be active parties in the upcoming negotiations for a Post- Kyoto treaty.

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The Editors