

## **AFED Announces its Recommendations**

### **Arab Governments Should Take Initiatives for a Green Economy**

**Beirut, 28 October 2011**

The Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) concluded its fourth annual conference on Green Economy in a Changing Arab World, held in Habtoor Grand Hotel, Beirut. AFED Secretary General Najib Saab announced the conference recommendations, which agreed with AFED report that forward-looking Arab economic development models need to meet people's aspirations in economic security, social equity, resource efficiency, and environmental protection, and that continued deterioration in economic, social, and environmental conditions has generated systemic strain on livelihoods, health, and human wellbeing, and may even lead to more social and political turmoil. The conference also agreed that a green development agenda which seeks a balance among economic growth, environmental protection and social justice provides a sound foundation for addressing the shortcomings of Arab economies.

The conference called upon Arab governments to allocate a higher priority to agricultural rural development as a strategic policy objective to achieve food security, alleviate rural poverty, and reverse years of neglect. It also urged governments to introduce a policy shift towards water demand management that would regulate water access, improve water use efficiency, and prevent water pollution, in addition to introducing fair water tariffs that rationalize water use, achieve cost recovery in a gradual manner, and promote equity through targeted subsidies.

The conference stressed the need to adopt national and regional strategies for energy efficiency, demand-side management, cleaner energy, and renewable energy, to introduce municipal zoning regulations, and to develop a national industrial policy that provides appropriate and favorable institutional and regulatory framework for low-carbon industries and research and development (R&D) capabilities. It called upon private developers and regionally based professionals in architecture, construction, building materials, and engineering to increasingly accord energy and water efficiency a high priority and make use of green solutions in buildings. It also asked governments to make sustained investments in mass public transportation in Arab cities, to adopt a resource management approach to municipal solid waste that seeks to capture value from waste materials through reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery. Governments should promote investments in converting organic food waste into compost and biogas, as well as waste-to-energy strategies. They should also develop a package of policy instruments to implement sustainable tourism practices in travel, hospitality, and recreational services, as well as community-based cultural tourism, to help in nature conservation and to support local economies.

The conference called upon regional organizations and governments to activate the Arab Environment Facility and establish regional green economy initiatives, covering: Research and Development, Renewable Energy Solutions, Sustainable Communities, Cleaner Production, Sustainable Agriculture, Regional Transport Networks.

## **Second Day Sessions**

AFED released its *Energy Efficiency Handbook*, the first to be developed for the Arab region. It is intended for use as a guide for identifying and prioritizing cost-effective energy efficiency investments in office buildings.

The fifth session of AFED's conference was about greening cities, buildings and transportation. A holistic design approach that incorporates environmental principles in building form, materials, orientation, equipment installations and other aspects is proposed to yield the highest energy efficiency gains. Policies in favor of mass public transit systems and vehicle fuel efficiency standards have been demonstrated to have a relatively low cost while yielding high economic, social, and environmental dividends within a short period of time.

The sixth session dealt with tourism and waste management. The Arab tourism sector attracted 60 million tourists in 2010, and there is a need to develop regulations, incentives, and capacity building to implement sustainable tourism practices. It was also emphasized that there is an urgent need for a fundamental shift in the approach to municipal solid waste from waste dumping, burning and land filling to a resource management approach that seeks to capture value from waste materials through reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery.

The seventh session discussed green economy as an engine for growth. A special high-level session discussed ideas and policies leading to a transition to a green economy.

The conference closed with an open discussion followed by recommendations.