

Statement of Major Groups and Stakeholders from the West Asia Region to the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), 2025.

We, the Major Groups and Stakeholders from the West Asia region, present this statement in preparation for the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) and the 21st Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-21).

Our collective voice reflects the needs, priorities, aspirations, and challenges of: civil society, women, children and youth, Indigenous peoples, local communities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community, and persons with disabilities across the region.

Civil society in West Asia expresses deep gratitude to the UNEP West Asia Office for organizing the preparatory meeting for UNEA-7 in September, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, which enabled the participation of civil society and positively contributed to enriching many side discussions and supporting joint efforts to serve the region, enhance sustainable environmental action, and unify positions on environmental issues.

We participated in the UNEA-7 preparations with a unified goal and clear message calling for urgent and inclusive environmental action based on environmental justice, human rights, and sustainability. Organizations in the region are particularly concerned about the interconnected and escalating crises our region faces, including climate change, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, the impact of wars and conflicts, displacement, youth unemployment, and gender inequality.

We reaffirm the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals as a shared roadmap for dignity, equality, and sustainable development. National and regional policies must align with the three dimensions—environmental, social, and economic, and adhere to principles of transparency, gender equality, and common but differentiated responsibilities.

Occupation and armed conflict are among the most prominent factors exacerbating environmental degradation in our region, through the destruction of environmental infrastructure, resource depletion, and the pollution of water, soil, and air. Environmental challenges, such as pollution, desertification, extreme heat, and ecosystem collapse, continue to rise, threatening public health and livelihoods, undermining recovery and long-term development efforts, especially in fragile and conflict-affected communities. These crises deprive people of their basic right to a clean and healthy environment and threaten human dignity.

We call for full recognition, regular monitoring, and addressing of the environmental impacts of occupation and war within regional and international frameworks. We urge UNEP and all partners to integrate ecosystem restoration and environmental resilience into post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding strategies.

We call for the integration of intergenerational justice into all decisions and policies at local, national, regional, and international levels, to protect the rights and opportunities of future generations. We express solidarity with communities suffering the catastrophic and negative

effects of occupation, conflict, displacement, and instability, circumstances that deepen human suffering and accelerate environmental degradation, where environmental assessments and rehabilitation programs are nearly impossible. Human rights and ecosystems are interconnected, and their protection requires full respect for international law and humanitarian principles.

We stress that environmental justice must be inclusive and intersectional, based on accountability, and incorporated into multilevel and multilateral governance systems to ensure fair and sustainable responses to environmental challenges. A just environmental transition must be integrated into social policies to guarantee sustainability and the rights of current and future generations.

In West Asia, women, youth, children, and local communities are at the forefront of efforts toward peace and nature-based environmental recovery, even though they are among the most affected by environmental and humanitarian crises. Women face health risks, food and water insecurity, and increased vulnerability due to conflict, displacement, and gender-based violence, yet they lead resilience and community innovation initiatives. Youth suffer from unemployment, limited opportunities, and rising climate anxiety, particularly in conflict and occupied areas. Children, especially displaced ones, lack basic rights such as education, clean water, and safe spaces, making them vulnerable to pollution and war remnants.

We call on the international community to commit to a just and inclusive peace that protects women, youth, children, and local communities at all stages of environmental policy, from planning to implementation and evaluation, ensuring their active participation by guaranteeing human and environmental security, access to education, health, clean water, green economic opportunities, and empowering vulnerable groups in decision-making and natural resource management. This enhances community resilience and nature-based environmental recovery.

The shift toward a green and just economy must be inclusive and equitable, ensuring that no one is left behind. We urge governments to invest fossil fuel revenues in clean renewable energy infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, and low-emission cities, by promoting investment in green jobs, vocational training, and social protection systems that align with global transitions and economic stability.

We call for the full implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration to ensure the fundamental environmental rights of access to information, public participation, and justice. This requires adopting the Bali Guidelines and developing effective national legal frameworks to guarantee these rights. Civil society is a key partner in monitoring and shaping environmental policies, and a supportive environment must be provided to ensure their role is neither marginalized nor restricted.

We call for strengthening regional coordination mechanisms among Major Groups and Stakeholders in West Asia through training programs and practical projects aimed at building the capacity of civil society organizations in the environmental field. We also urge the UNEP West Asia Regional Office to support civil society organizations, involve them in national and regional meetings, enhance regional coordination, and engage them in Arab League meetings. We advocate for the development of collaborative platforms to share expertise and knowledge,

coordinate efforts, ensure collective accountability, and provide technical and logistical support to guarantee effective and sustainable environmental projects.

Access to reliable, real-time environmental data is essential. We need to enhance technical cooperation in technology transfer and ownership, invest in regional scientific research and innovation, focusing on water efficiency, modern irrigation techniques, recycling in waste management, renewable energy, and digital inclusion. Capacity-building efforts must focus on local knowledge systems and community-based solutions.

We emphasize the urgent need for regional cooperation to protect shared natural resources. The governance of transboundary waters, combating desertification, and conserving biodiversity on land, in national marine areas, and the high seas requires a fair, sustainable approach based on international law and the human right to a healthy environment.

We call for the application of international humanitarian law and human rights law and reject the use of humans, the environment, and natural resources as tools of war or pressure. We emphasize the need to ensure access to aid and medical and food supplies in conflict zones, particularly regarding the wars in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and other similar areas. Reconstruction of housing, health, environmental, and agricultural infrastructure must be a priority in responding to the consequences of wars and conflicts.

Recommendations and Required Actions

1. **Recognize Ecocide as an international crime** that requires accountability and punishment under international law.
2. **Form independent fact-finding missions** under UNEP to monitor and document environmental violations in occupied and conflict areas.
3. **Establish the right to environmental reconstruction** in areas affected by occupation and conflict as part of environmental justice and human rights.
4. **Halt international and governmental support** for any projects or policies that cause pollution or harm the environment.
5. **Launch green jobs programs** for all social segments to promote social and environmental justice.
6. **Enhance transparency and access to environmental information** by institutionalizing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and ensuring civil society participation in decision-making.
7. **Resume grants and funding** to support civil society organizations in implementing their environmental initiatives and programs.
8. **Support training programs and practical projects** to build the capacity of civil society organizations in environmental protection and sustainable development.
 - We emphasize the vital role of the League of Arab States in leading this direction by mobilizing necessary resources and providing a supportive institutional environment.
 - We stress the importance of ensuring the effective and organized participation of civil society organizations in regional environmental and development meetings and mechanisms in coordination with the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia.

Your Excellencies,

The future of West Asia depends on achieving peace, strengthening resilience, and sound environmental governance. We believe that the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) presents a pivotal opportunity to transform international commitments into tangible actions with real impact on the ground.

As Major Groups and Stakeholders from West Asia, we renew our commitment to work jointly with Member States, UNEP, and all partners to build an inclusive, just, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable future for our region.

There is no sustainable development without a healthy environment, and no healthy environment without a just and inclusive peace.