MANAMA COMMUNIQUÉ
THE JOINT STATEMENT OF THE 2019 MENA REGIONAL HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON GREEN ECONOMY
4 July 2019, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

1. A clear priority for many developed and developing economies is the need for innovation, productivity, and secure jobs. While different stakeholders might have varying needs, there is an overall need for higher productivity and efficiency, stronger resilience and innovation.

2. Green economy offers vast opportunities for economic, which is of particular concern for the countries in the Global South, as well as enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare, creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earth’s ecosystems.

3. Failure to take actions threatens to potentially lead to environmental degradation that can have serious negative implications on future human health and welfare, and our entire ecosystem. A number of environmental systems are being pushed beyond sustainable limits through, for example, loss of biodiversity, nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, land use change, and climate change.

4. In order to drive sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and job creation, particularly for women, youth and the poor, it is important that implementation of green economy policies would adopt a holistic approach, by linking financing, technology, capacity development and other elements of the enabling environment for the green economy. Considerable advantages and synergies can be derived from enhancing cooperation between public and private sectors in the widespread and effective adoption of green economy principles and practices.

5. The 2019 MENA Regional High-Level Forum on Green Economy, that took place during 2-4 July 2019 in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, was a result of the success of the annual, since 2014, World Green Economy Summit (WGES) model and a direct response to the requests of participating countries and institutional partners to bring green economy solutions closer to the regional contexts and to deepen the impact of transition to a green economy through scaling up and replication of successful practices at the regional level.

6. The Regional High-Level Forum on Green Economy was designed as an extension to WGES aiming to raise regional awareness by showcasing and scaling up the impact of successful evidence-based green economy solutions crafted and tested by countries in the MENA Region in addressing sustainable development challenges pertinent to the needs and aspirations of the region.

7. The three thematic focus areas of the 2019 MENA Regional High-Level Forum on Green Economy were improving regulatory and policy frameworks for a green economy, promoting innovative green investment through public-private partnerships, and advancing national-level capacities for a holistic green action.

8. The 2019 MENA Regional High-Level Forum on Green Economy was organized by the World Green Economy Organization in close cooperation with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office in the Kingdom of Bahrain, as well as in partnership with UNIDO ITPO Bahrain, the UN Climate Change, UN ESCWA, UNDP, and the International Solar Alliance, and was hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain under the patronage of the Supreme Council for Environment of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
9. It brought together high-level government representatives, representatives of international organizations, foundations, as well as relevant private sector players and civil society actors from the MENA Region and beyond.

10. The participants of the Forum agreed to produce a joint statement intended to further promote the green economy agenda and to serve as a policy recommendation framework on the practical aspects related to advancing the transition to a green economy model.

11. More specifically, the participants agreed on the following recommendations:

A. While progress has been made on green economy policies, legislation, financing, technologies and action in many countries of the MENA Region over the past two decades, it is now time to take a truly integrated and holistic approach to transitioning to an inclusive and green economy taking into consideration the national circumstances of each country. This includes the following actions:

   a. To embed systematically green economy principles and practice in countries’ overarching national visions or strategies;

   b. To strengthen national and local institutions, their mandates and capacities (including financial and human ones) to formulate, implement and monitor vertical (i.e. global to local) and horizontal (i.e. sectoral and spatial) integration for a green economy transition;

   c. To strengthen coordinated involvement of regional and international institutions aligned with country priorities and the objectives and implementation pathways of globally agreed development frameworks – given the global nature of economic and environmental challenges.

B. Principles of sustainability, green practices and social inclusion need to take a lead role in our thinking on economic development, which implies the needs:

   a. To ensure national ownership and localization as key to advocating and moving the green economy agenda;

   b. To advocate for positive social trends to achieve the SDGs by 2030, to transform our societies and economies to deliver the maximum economic, environmental, and social benefits of the Inclusive Green Economy paradigm;

   c. To use economic tools to shift behaviors of consumers and producers towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption;

   d. To align government policy proposals on landfill reduction targets, increasing recyclability of products, improving economics of recycling, as well as supporting consumer goods industry in moving towards global commitments;

   e. To reform legislative frameworks to provide incentives for environmental focus – including revision and alignment of existing legislation – to ensure policy coherence, remove any existing contradictions and mainstream green economy principles and instruments;

   f. To enhance effective disclosure of environmental, social and governance information and criteria for responsible investment;
g. To effectively exchange experiences and best practices of other countries and share their own solutions for advancing inclusive green economy approaches and practice; to widely utilize the role of the international community for building the capacities to transfer technologies needed to adapt them to national contexts, and to build national capacity to attract financing and to put forward proposals as well as clear strategies to transform into greener economies;

h. To strengthen partnerships in advancing innovative solutions, including public-private partnerships and South-South cooperation.

C. Much more financial investments are required to cover the needs of the nations, to build more resilient societies and inclusive, green economies. First of all, a special attention and considerable relocation of the finances are required to cover the relevant needs of least developed and developing countries, and small developing island states. **Sufficient financing needs to be directed and secured for advancing the transition to an inclusive, green economy; it is recommended:**

a. To undertake Green financing interventions by all concerned sectors - government agencies, private sector, and consumers;

b. To adapt and refocus the mechanisms of accessing international finance for green economy projects;

c. To develop national and regional climate finance strategies that contribute to establishing tools for green finance by giving clear signals and direction from government on its needs and priorities to direct domestic and international finance and where possible to pursue public-private partnership;

d. To consider using smart tax incentives, rebates and subsidies outcomes to drive inclusive green economy and also support loans, green bonds, blended financing, green procurement and redirecting existing finance toward green initiatives;

e. To apply green finance instruments monitoring and evaluation which is crucial to ensure that money is used for intended purposes and that the financing instruments are appropriate and effective in delivering inclusive green economy outcomes;

f. To acknowledge the key role of NGOs as conveners and multi-stakeholder partnerships, including in bringing blended finance to project or community levels;

D. **National capacities need to be enhanced to serve as a foundation for transition to a green economy, which requires the following actions:**

a. To undertake more effective capacity development at all levels and for all stakeholders;

b. To widen education on green action (involving schools and universities) and amplify messages to more systematically push for a transition towards an inclusive green economy by sharing more success stories, pilot different green actions, and speaking the language of the general public;

c. To deepen and broaden networks between different stakeholder groups (including academia), and focusing on bringing citizens along the transition journey to accomplish a paradigm shift and mainstream transformational thinking;
d. To deepen collaboration, especially in tackling waste management issues which are of paramount importance; to adopt solutions for the waste management framework aligned to the specifics of population needs, and based on life-cycle assessment, and new technologies;

e. To support platforms to encourage and facilitate capacity sharing in terms of expertise and technical knowhow on how to adopt practices that are green friendly;

f. To invest in technical research on green innovation and enhance national capacities for technological development, especially the innovative technologies revolving around waste management among municipal solid waste (MSW) which is a major concern in terms of climate and environmental impacts; to convert organic fraction of MSW (more than 50% of MSW) into clean energy, etc.;

g. To up-scale the green innovative technologies, develop pilot projects, while supporting and developing collective responsibility as a main driver for transformational change for a transition towards green economy;

h. To ensure policies development and government interventions to support scaling up of innovative technologies;

i. To encourage volunteerism - driven by conviction it can accelerate the transition to a green economy by providing time and skills, building capacity at different levels from communities to government and linking green experiments and start-ups to viable, scalable solutions; to support volunteer initiatives for capacity building/knowledge transfer and definitions of strategies; volunteers to strengthen national/state capacities towards a greener economy; local, community-level formal or informal volunteerism initiatives.

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