



Ministry of Justice
Republic of Lebanon



Regional Conference on
“Environmental Crimes in the Arab States”

March 17-18, 2009

Beirut- Republic of Lebanon

Recommendations

We, the official delegations from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen as well as representatives from the civil society and media participating in the regional conference on “Environmental Crimes in the Arab States” held in Beirut, Lebanon on the 17th and 18th of March 2009, with the support of the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region in cooperation with UNDP Lebanon, and the United Nations Environment Programme(UNEP) and under the patronage of the Lebanese Ministries of Justice and Environment;

AWARE that environment is the mother of life and that balancing between the rights of humans and the rights of nature are at the heart of human development, given the large influence of the environment on life, health, and sources of livelihood, especially for the poor and the inhabitants of agricultural and rural areas;

CONVINCED that the dangers threatening the environment are continuously increasing and that protecting it is a national and humanitarian duty shared by everyone, with the state, including its legislative, executive and judicial branches, being accountable for this protection;

EXPRESSING our desire to increase the momentum towards developing and activating environmental protection mechanisms at the level of legislation and enforcement and to strengthen environmental education among citizens in general and concerned public officials in particular;

1. Declare our commitment to increase awareness on environmental protection in our countries based on international norms and standards, with a view towards encouraging decision-makers to ratify and implement related international and regional treaties;
2. Highlight the importance of considering the adoption of a comprehensive approach to environmental protection, including preventive aspects and punitive aspects, both civil and criminal, through the periodic evaluation of related policies, laws and practices;

3. Recommend deepening dialogue in Arab countries to (a) expand knowledge on the scope and scale of problems caused by environmental violations and associated dangers, and (b) support designing adequate punitive policy, taking into consideration the need to establish certain violations as serious offenses with substantial fines to produce a deterrent effect and trigger international cooperation, as well as the need to review related statutes of limitation;
4. Ascertain the importance of establishing specialised prosecution functions with supporting agencies and specialised courts in the field of environmental crimes given their role in improving the capacity of the state to address serious violations in a more competent and effective manner;
5. Stress the importance of incorporating sound principles into legislative drafting as to the positive impact it would have on improving related legal and institutional frameworks;
6. Confirm the importance of modernising curricula in judicial institutes and universities and other institutes in areas related to environmental protection, including legal and scientific aspects, especially in the area of criminology and forensics, in order to respond to the requirements of environmental protection in a more effective manner, through a regional mechanism that enables the exchange of knowledge and maximises the use of available resources and expertise;
7. Emphasize the importance of providing technical support to public prosecutors and supporting agencies in investigating and prosecuting environmental crimes, especially in the area of criminology and forensics, with a view to enabling them to play their role in light of the challenges brought forward by globalisation and technological advances, and considering the growing links between environmental crimes and transnational organised crime, which is becoming an increasing threat in a number of Arab countries;
8. Underline the role of the media in its different forms, as a main partner in protecting the environment and exposing violations and harmful practices based on independence, objectivity and quality performance;

9. Call for the establishment of an environmental electronic encyclopaedia for Arab countries encompassing legislation, bilateral and multilateral treaties, supported by related jurisprudence and doctrines;
 10. Support the suggestion to establish a specialised international court to address and punish environmental crimes;
 11. Invite the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to increase consultations with Arab governments, partner institutions and donor countries to develop and implement a regional project on environmental protection in the Arab countries through strengthening regulatory frameworks and developing effective mechanisms and capacities in the area of law enforcement, with emphasis on encouraging international cooperation in addition to cooperation among national authorities, and between them and nongovernmental actors such as civil society, the media, and the private sector.
 12. Present our sincere thanks and appreciation to Their Excellencies the Ministers of Justice and Environment for hosting and supporting this event, as well as to the organizers for their technical and logistical efforts which contributed to making this very important meeting successful.
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