

Cyprus Declaration on Energy, Water and Climate Change

Building Bridges between Europe, the Middle East and North Africa

Preamble: The International Conference on Energy, Water & Climate Change/Building Bridges between Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (EWACC2012, 10-12 December 2012) and the Young Scholars Forum (three-day event prior to EWACC2012, 7-9 December 2012) formulated a declaration that build upon and extends that of the EWACC2010 conference in 2010.

The region that encompasses the Mediterranean, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with a rapidly growing population of approximately 500 million people, is characterized by strong environmental gradients, climate extremes and diverse economic, social and cultural identities. Increasing temperatures are clearly manifest in the region, which qualifies as a global climate change “hot spot”.

Adverse impacts of air pollution and climate change are anticipated, and major challenges in energy and food security, threats to environmental integrity and human health, as well as decreasing availability of freshwater need to be managed.

Science and technology are central for economic growth and societal well-being. In addressing the many and growing challenges for humanity, scientific research is crucial to find sustainable solutions. Considering the need for affordable energy and access to freshwater, and the interdependence of the energy, water and agricultural sectors, innovative technologies have a large potential to improve living conditions.

A judicious management of the climate risks is necessary. Scientific, technological and agricultural solutions need to be adopted to combat the undesirable consequences of climate change. Since the MENA region has unique vulnerabilities, associated with hot and dry weather conditions, region-specific solutions must be developed.

There is a need to develop and optimize conventional and non-conventional water resources such as rainwater harvesting, the re-use of treated wastewater and desalination, and there are options for a more sparing consumption of water in the MENA. This is particularly relevant in the agricultural sector, where the use of modern irrigation technologies, less water-intensive crops as well as optimized irrigation schedules offer potential for decreasing water use.

The MENA region has the important potential to develop renewable energy sources to meet its needs and to contribute to the provision of energy in Europe. Affordable technologies, appropriate for the needs and conditions in the MENA need to be furthered. This requires investments in infrastructure, capacity building and knowledge transfer, which will lead to job creation. There is a need to promote young scientists in the region to prepare future generations to the challenges ahead.

Enhanced European-MENA partnership on science and technology should be developed through co-operations between research and educational institutions. Owing to the strategic location and the EU membership of Cyprus, this country could play a catalytic role in promoting such a partnership and organize regional networking and capacity building activities.

A strengthening of the science/policy interface in the Euro-Mediterranean region is important to further – based on scientific evidence – informed decisions in policy-making processes. This will enable an improved linkage of high quality scientific research with societal developments in both Europe and the MENA.

Considering the common interests of the peoples of the MENA, the region should pursue coordinated scientific positions in the international debate. Scientific and academic institutions in the region are encouraged to coordinate research and communicate the findings to governments and policy makers. This ties-in with the need to invest in research, education and training, which is essential to further innovation aimed at achieving water, energy and food security, and is a prerequisite for prosperity and economic growth.