



**2013 - 2014**

**Model Arab League**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers**

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National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations



## Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers

Honorable Delegates,

Hello, my name is Molly Glibbery, and it is an honor to serve as your chair for the Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers for the 2014 National University Model Arab League Conference. I am a junior at Converse College, and this is my third academic year on the Converse Model Arab League team. Though I am majoring in music therapy, Model Arab League has truly been one of the most impactful experiences of my college career. Not only has it helped to develop my professional skills, but it has also given me a stronger understanding of a vital and dynamic part of our world, the MENA region. I hope that the experience you have with this conference and model programs in general will provide you with just as wonderful of an experience.

I first wish to commend you for your willingness to take on the topics presented to you in the Environmental Affairs Council. Indeed, we live in a world that is becoming more aware of just how integral a well-preserved and flourishing environment is for a progressive society. This is especially true for the member states of the Arab League. From the GCC region to those member states in the northern part of Africa, the Arab League has a lot to offer in terms of environmental diversity and natural resources. It is integral that these resources must be preserved and prosper; this is something most member states can agree upon. However, where opinions diverge is employing mechanisms and solutions to address the problems presented when member states try to protect their regional environments.

Your task as ministers of the Council of Arab Environmental Affairs of the League of Arab States is to address the problems and differences that occur when trying to establish sustainable practices. Indeed, sustainability should be just one facet of the many factors that compose the commonalities of what you wish to achieve with solutions to these varied topics. You have many factors to consider in your solutions-from just what resources states can utilize to preserve their environments to defining just what environmental stability looks like and ensuring that every state's sovereignty is fully respected. I wish you the best of luck in your pursuits.

Regards,

Molly Glibbery  
Chair, Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers

## Council of Environmental Affairs Ministers

### Topic 1: Examining methods of creating a more environmentally-friendly industrial sector, with emphasis on the use and development of alternative energy resources

#### I. Introduction to Topic

##### A. General Background

The Industrial Revolution of the 1700s that began in Great Britain, spread to the United States, and eventually, most of the world left a lasting impact on today's society. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution introduced a whole new model of business and ushered the world into a new era of mass production. Within recent years, the rapid expansion and development of the industrial sector has made it more efficient and integral to society's functioning than ever before, but with this build up of industry has also come a significant environmental deterioration.

According to the Ecology Global Network, such non-renewable resources as coal and oil, both crucial energy supplies for industry since its humble beginnings, were not truly understood to be completely expendable and environmentally harmful until the 1940s.<sup>1</sup> One consequence of industrialization is deforestation, which both depletes the environment of oxygen-providing trees and uproots the wildlife trees support, causing a rift in the ecosystem. Another consequence is the rise in pollution and industrial emissions. This pollution has effects on nearly every part of the environment, emitting harmful gases such as hydrogen chloride that both make the air we breathe toxic and kill various forms of wildlife.<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations notes, however, that if society continues to place a greater emphasis on limiting their carbon footprint, there are several alternative energy resources that have already been put in use and by 2050, have the potential to be mostly, if not fully, developed and implemented. Four applications in which the UN believes alternative energy resources could be used in industry include "biomass [organic mostly plant derived material converted into renewable energy] to process heat, biomass for petrochemical feedstock, solar thermal systems for process heat, and heat pumps for process heat."<sup>3</sup> Some alternative energy resources that could significantly cut down on deleterious industry-environment consequences include the use of bio-coal, solar power, wind power, and hydraulics.<sup>4</sup>

##### B. History of Topic in the Arab World

Historically, it has been difficult for member states of the Arab League to achieve sustainable development in the industrial sector. Indeed, the basis of the modern day Arabic economy is

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<sup>1</sup> McLamb, Eric. "The Ecological Impact of the Industrial Revolution." *The Ecology Global Network*. September 18th, 2011. <<http://www.ecology.com/2011/09/18/ecological-impact-industrial-revolution/>>

<sup>2</sup> Claudio, Luz. "Waste Couture: Environmental Impact of the Clothing Industry". *Environmental Health Perspectives*. September 2007. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1964887/>>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Industrial Development Organization. "Renewable Energy in Industrial Applications." <[http://www.unido.org/fileadmin/user\\_media/Services/Energy\\_and\\_Climate\\_Change/Energy\\_Efficiency/Renewable\\_s\\_%20Industrial\\_%20Applications.pdf](http://www.unido.org/fileadmin/user_media/Services/Energy_and_Climate_Change/Energy_Efficiency/Renewable_s_%20Industrial_%20Applications.pdf)>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

mostly oil and gas, the production of which emits harmful chemicals into the environment.<sup>5</sup> A study done by the American University of Beirut showed that 93% of the population of Beirut is exposed to high levels of air pollution.<sup>6</sup> NASA has also noted through satellite pictures that the MENA region has large and rapidly increasing amounts of smog in the region<sup>7</sup>. However, the region has also been a leader in trying to meet the challenge of limiting the use of deleterious industrial practice and replacing them with alternative energy sources. For example, from October 28-30, 2013, Green Middle East 2013, a conference concerned with supporting and informing regional industries with regard to environmentally friendly practices, is going to be hosted in Sharjah, UAE.<sup>8</sup> In addition, many member states of the Arab League have already utilized alternative energy on a smaller scale, especially solar power.

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

Though the Arab League has been diligent in trying to curb environmental degradation resulting from industrialization, there is still a lot of room for improvement. Indeed, this is a topic that relates to several dimensions of the LAS society, and it should follow that solutions would somehow address these varied dimensions. For example, hydrocarbon energy (that is, oil, coal, etc.) forms the very basis of many member states' economies, especially in the GCC region. Not only does this prevent member states from maximizing on the development of currently less lucrative alternative energy resources, but it also creates more problems for the long term as hydrocarbons are the sources of a lot of industrial pollution. Diversifying the economy is essential for both the environmental and the economic futures of the region. In addition, though as a whole the LAS production of air pollution is relatively low, the production of air pollution locally is incredibly high with levels as high as six to seven times the legal limits in states like Egypt.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the removal of industrial waste and pollution and the introduction of alternative energy resources that would provide aid on a local level could become an issue of sovereignty. The Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers must create solutions to the issue at hand that both bolster the current alternative energy use within member states while also improving and expanding resources used to create a greener industrial sector. In addition, solutions should also observe how governments, the industrial sector, and private sector may collaborate in solving these problems.<sup>10</sup>

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

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<sup>5</sup> "The Industrial Revolution and its Impact on Our Environment." *eco-issues.com*. August 27th, 2012. <http://eco-issues.com/TheIndustrialRevolutionandItsImpactonOurEnvironment.html>

<sup>6</sup> Wadvalla, Bibi-Aisha. "Air Pollution Threatens Health in Beirut." *natureMIDDLE EAST*. May 19th, 2011. <http://www.nature.com/nmiddleeast/2011/110519/full/nmiddleeast.2011.60.html>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> AME.com. "Expo Centre Sharjah to Host Environment Tech Show." August 20th, 2013. <http://www.ameinfo.com/expo-centre-sharjah-host-environment-tech-351890>

<sup>9</sup> University of Gothenburg. "Environmental and Climate Change Policy Brief." *Sida Environment Help Desk*. 2010. [http://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/wordpress3/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/MENA\\_Env-CC-Policy-Brief-2010.pdf](http://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/wordpress3/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/MENA_Env-CC-Policy-Brief-2010.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Yamori, Najat. "Middle East and North Africa: Environment Sector Brief." *The World Bank*. September 2008. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,contentMDK:20525954~pagePK:146736~piPK:226340~theSitePK:256299,00.html>

- Has my country noticeably utilized alternative energy resources? If so, what kind and for what purpose?
- What parts of the industrial sector pose potential/current threats to the environment?
- Are alternative energy resources publically sponsored or mostly privately sponsored in my state? In the Arab League states as a whole?
- What alternative energy resources are most widely utilized in the Arab League member states? Are there any innovations that have yet to be researched or used, and why?
- Are there practices utilized in industries, particularly within the Arab world, that are preventing them from being ecologically sound?
- Is there legislation in place that regulates industrial practice for the purpose of environmental preservation in your state?

### III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What makes an industry environmentally friendly?
- How can Arab industries best acquire and utilize alternative energy resources?
- How can the Arab League better track the impact of industry on the ecosystem without infringing on state sovereignty?

### IV. Resources to Review

- Reed Exhibitions. *World Future Energy Summit*. 2013.  
<http://www.worldfutureenergysummit.com/>
- University of Gothenburg. "Environmental and Climate Change Policy Brief." *Sida Environment Help Desk*. 2010. [http://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/wordpress3/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/MENA\\_Env-CC-Policy-Brief-2010.pdf](http://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/wordpress3/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/MENA_Env-CC-Policy-Brief-2010.pdf)
- Yamori, Najat. "Middle East and North Africa: Environment Sector Brief." *The World Bank*. September 2008.  
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,contentMDK:20525954~pagePK:146736~piPK:226340~theSitePK:256299,00.html>

## **Topic 2: Assessing the impact of environmental degradation in current conflict zones on agricultural industries and considering possible remedies**

### **I. Introduction to Topic**

#### **A. General Background**

Conflict zones have both direct and indirect consequences. Directly, conflict zones result in the deaths of both military personnel and civilians alike. Military conflict also has the potential to destroy the environment of the area in which it occurs. Indirectly, as a result of the destroyed environment, agricultural resources like soil, grazing areas, and water supplies can be severely stunted or eliminated completely, impacting the cultivation of food, animals, and other life forms necessary to sustain life. In modern history, this was perhaps best seen in the Vietnam War of the 1970s, in which herbicides were used to completely kill off vegetation that was used for both enemy cover and food supply.<sup>11</sup> Even in ancient Rome and Assyria, armies destroyed both enemy combatants and civilizations by making environments infertile and/or toxic for use.<sup>12</sup>

There are several organizations whose function is to recover agricultural capabilities lost to conflict in areas of warfare and conflict. The United Nations Environment Programme is probably one of the most noted of these. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will help countries who request aid by performing analyses of conflict zone lands, identifying their needs, and then coordinating organizations to help reestablish environmental and therefore agricultural stability.<sup>13</sup> The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict adopted at the Hague in the Netherlands in 1954 also contains some provisions for countries to follow in case attacks on lands important to the functioning of a society are imminent, such as the provision of military forces trained to protect the property and having emergency measures in place to preserve the environment when conflict first occurs.<sup>14</sup>

#### **B. History of Topic in the Arab World**

Unfortunately, many member states of the LAS have experienced extensive conflicts which have wreaked havoc on the environments in which they have occurred. This has, in turn, affected agricultural development in those areas. For example, the various conflicts that have occurred in Iraq, such as the First Gulf War, or with Iran, have caused the complete elimination of croplands, orchards, and grazing areas for livestock, and led to catastrophic assaults on unique ecological habitats, such as the Mesopotamian Marshes.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> World Watch Institute. "War and the Environment." 2013. <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5520>.

<sup>12</sup>Partow, Hassan. "Environmental Impact of Wars and Conflicts." *Arab Forum for Environment Development Online*. 2008. <http://www.afedonline.org/afedreport/english/book12.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Environment Programme. "Post-Crisis Environmental Assessment." 2013. <http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/Introduction/PostCrisisEnvironmentalAssessment/tabid/54351/Default.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. "Armed Conflict and Heritage: Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict." 2013. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/>

<sup>15</sup> Partow, Hassan. "Environmental Impact of Wars and Conflicts." *Arab Forum for Environment Development Online*. 2008. <http://www.afedonline.org/afedreport/english/book12.pdf>

According to the UNEP, internal conflicts seem to have the most detrimental effects on the environment, and those most affected by conflict are populations residing in rural areas.<sup>16</sup> This is best seen today in the Syrian conflict between the Assad Regime and its opposition. The complex conflict occurring there has brought about a 60% decrease in vegetable production. This is a problem of great magnitude as 80% of Syrian citizens make their living through some sector of the agricultural industry, contributing to a rise in poverty as the destruction of essential resources often does.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, diminishing resources is contributing to the Syrian conflict. The farming sector has been mostly destroyed, quickly depleting Syria of necessary resources.

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

To find a solution to this problem will require delegates to observe the many facets that drive this problem. Conflict and resources often become apart of a vicious cycle. Conflict begins and resources are destroyed, resulting in scarcity of food and environmental resources.<sup>18</sup> However, that scarcity of resources also drives conflict. In addition, weapons like landmines not only destroy crops but the lands on which they can be harvested.<sup>19</sup> The question arises as to whether there should be strategies in place to revive the environment so that food resources can be raised there or if a system to find new land resources needs to be in place to revitalize agricultural growth immediately. There also lies the question of how environmental concerns can be addressed in times of conflict, when it would be a great risk to attempt to remedy environmental impacts in an active conflict zone.

### **III. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- Does my member state have any major conflict zones that impact the environment?
- Is my country currently providing aid in current conflict zones? If so, does this include any aid to agricultural industries that might be affected by a respective conflict?
- What agricultural industries are most important, and therefore, require the highest degree of protection in current conflict zones?
- How have my country and the Arab League as whole sought to preserve agricultural and environmental resources in the past?
- What are the main consequences of environmental degradation on the agricultural industry?

### **IV. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

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<sup>16</sup>World Food Summit. "Agricultural Development and the Cost of Conflict." *United Nations Environment Program*. [http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/Instructor%20Version/Part\\_2/Activities/Interest\\_Groups/Justice\\_and\\_Peace/Supplemental/Agricultural\\_Development\\_and\\_the\\_Cost\\_of\\_Conflict.pdf](http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/Instructor%20Version/Part_2/Activities/Interest_Groups/Justice_and_Peace/Supplemental/Agricultural_Development_and_the_Cost_of_Conflict.pdf)

<sup>17</sup>United Nations News Center. "Syrian harvests devastated as conflict continues, UN agricultural agency says." January 23rd, 2013 <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43985#.UkSKemTwKA1>

<sup>18</sup>World Food Summit. "Agricultural Development and the Cost of Conflict." *United Nations Environment Program*.

[http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/Instructor%20Version/Part\\_2/Activities/Interest\\_Groups/Justice\\_and\\_Peace/Supplemental/Agricultural\\_Development\\_and\\_the\\_Cost\\_of\\_Conflict.pdf](http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/Instructor%20Version/Part_2/Activities/Interest_Groups/Justice_and_Peace/Supplemental/Agricultural_Development_and_the_Cost_of_Conflict.pdf)

<sup>19</sup>Shah, Anup. "Landmines." *Global Issues*. November 27th, 2009.

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/79/landmines>

- Can environmental and agricultural industry degradation due to conflict be addressed at the same time with similar solutions?
- What emergency crisis relief can be provided to address the situation?
- Are there long-term solutions that can be applied to prevent complete regression of both environmental and agricultural well-being in areas of conflict once the conflict has passed and the emergency efforts have ceased?
- Because this topic looks at environmental degradation as it affects agricultural industry, a potentially economic topic, what part of this topic can be best addressed by the environmental council?

## V. Resources to Review

- Partow, Hassan. "Environmental Impact of Wars and Conflicts." *Arab Forum for Environment Development Online*. 2008.  
<http://www.afedonline.org/afedreport/english/book12.pdf>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. "Armed Conflict and Heritage: Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict." 2013.  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/> (look specifically at the conventions)
- World Food Summit. "Agricultural Development and the Cost of Conflict." *United Nations Environment Program*.  
[http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/Instructor%20Version/Part\\_2/Activities/Interest\\_Groups/Justice\\_and\\_Peace/Supplemental/Agricultural\\_Development\\_and\\_the\\_Cost\\_of\\_Conflict.pdf](http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/Instructor%20Version/Part_2/Activities/Interest_Groups/Justice_and_Peace/Supplemental/Agricultural_Development_and_the_Cost_of_Conflict.pdf)

### **Topic 3: Evaluating the potential environmental repercussions of plans to manipulate the flow and distribution of water, such as building dams, canals, and large-scale aquifer projects**

#### **I. Introduction to Topic**

##### **A. General Background**

Man-made means of manipulating the flow of water are necessary for a myriad of reasons. However, in recent years, it has been observed that though man-made means of water manipulation serve a vital purpose, they also can often be environmentally hazardous. Dams often deter fish migrations which can in turn prevent the fish from moving to spawning areas, and by putting a dam in a body of water, several changes from a lack of flowing water can occur that will often destroy water plant life and wildlife around the body of water. These changes include those in temperature and chemical composition of the water. Canals and levees can take water away from natural storage areas and have flow losses that result in drying out areas surrounding the water source. They can even wash away soil and put significant and detrimental amounts of sediments and salt in other areas.<sup>20</sup> However, these water manipulation mechanisms are certainly necessary. The Panama Canal is a prime example of a canal integral for transportation purposes. It joins North and South America and lies between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean, making it an essential waterway for efficient travel and trade.<sup>21</sup>

##### **B. History of Topic in the Arab World**

It has been said that the environmental issue of utmost importance that must be addressed by the Arab League is that of water. In the Arab world, utilization of canals, aquifers, and dams have been integral for the provision of water for all purposes. An excellent example of water manipulation mechanisms used on a large scale is the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal, originates in Egypt and was completed in 1869, connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the Suez Canal has become an integral part of many trade and transportation routes, allowing for a much shorter travel time between the Middle East and Europe. It also provides irrigation and drinking water for villages bordering the canal.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, water manipulation mechanisms are used to provide irrigation for agriculture that could not otherwise be sustained in the arid environment of the Arab world.

The presence of these water manipulation mechanisms, however, occasionally causes problems that can wreak havoc on the environment. The completion of the Suez Canal led to a change in water salinity that had a significant impact on the kind of plants and animals that could survive in the area surrounding the canal.<sup>24</sup> In addition, dams which prevent flooding and often pool water utilized for drinking and other purposes can be broken, leaving communities without a valuable

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<sup>20</sup> Parker, Matthew. "Changing Course." *The Guardian*. February 27th, 2007.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2007/feb/28/water.conservationandendangeredspecies>

<sup>21</sup> Panama Canal Authority. "This is The Canal." 2013. <http://www.pancanal.com/eng/acp/asi-es-el-canal.html>

<sup>22</sup> Fisher, William B. and Charles Gordon Smith. "Suez Canal." *Britannica Academic Edition*. 2013.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/571673/Suez-Canal>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

water source and destroying the environment around the dam through flooding. Most recently, this can be seen with the bombing of the al-Furat Dam in Syria by the Assad regime. It is believed that this destruction will cause the flooding of both agricultural lands and oil basins as far as Iraq.<sup>25</sup>

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

Water manipulation mechanisms are an integral part of most societies, but they are of especially high importance in the Arab world. As water manipulation mechanisms are continually built and repaired, it will become more important for the League of Arab States to consider the effects such water manipulation mechanisms can have on an environment that in many places is already fragile. A resolution for this topic will take into consideration the need for accurate identification of when and where water manipulation mechanisms are required. It also will consider what construction methods for water manipulation mechanisms will be most environmentally friendly.

### **III. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- How significant is the method of water distribution in my country?
- Has my country employed any projects to manipulate the flow of water? If so, what were their ecological effects?
- When is water flow and distribution manipulation necessary?
- Are there new resources or materials which should be considered for water flow manipulation that could potentially minimize negative effects on the environment?
- How is wildlife affected by water flow manipulation?

### **IV. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What is the protocol for dealing with water manipulation projects in waterways that cross state borders?
- What mechanism can be put in place to ensure that water manipulation does not have a larger negative impact than necessary on the environment?
- How can resources to best manipulate water flow be provided to states in need of assistance?

### **V. Resources to Review**

Fisher, William B. and Charles Gordon Smith. "Suez Canal." *Britannica Academic Edition*. 2013. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/571673/Suez-Canal>

Rebecca G. Harvey, William F. Loftus, Jennifer S. Rehage, and Frank J. Mazzotti. "Effects of Canals and Levees on Everglades Ecosystems." *University of Florida IFAS Extension*. 2013. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw349> (specific to Everglades, but does contain some information about environmental effects of canals in general)

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<sup>25</sup> World Bulletin. "Bombing of Dam by Assad May Cause a Disaster." September 10th, 2013. <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=117502>

“Inventory of Shared Aquifers in the Middle East.” *INWEB*. 2013.

[http://www.inweb.gr/index.php?option=com\\_inwebmedamapsdatabaseeast&Itemid=205](http://www.inweb.gr/index.php?option=com_inwebmedamapsdatabaseeast&Itemid=205)

McCully, Patrick. “Dams: What They Are and What They Do.” *International Rivers: People, Water, Life*. 2013. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/dams-what-they-are-and-what-they-do>

## **Topic 4: Discussing the creation of an Arab League mechanism to designate and protect areas of invaluable natural and ecological significance to the heritage of the region**

### **I. Introduction to Topic**

#### **A. General Background**

As today's society becomes increasingly more industrialized, protected ecological areas like national parks and nature reserves are necessary to preserve threatened lands and the wildlife they support. It is the case that many environmental areas are protected because they are the habitats for endangered species. Organizations like World Land Trust and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature have been developed for the purpose of championing and supporting the conservation of these valuable spaces.<sup>26</sup> These sites are preserved for both practical and historical reasons. In the practical sense, these areas may provide necessary natural resources that must be handled with care in order to prevent resource depletion. In a historical sense, these lands may be preserved as a means of safeguarding a region's unique geological features, such as the rainforests of the Amazon.<sup>27</sup> Some examples of culturally and ecologically significant sites in the Arab world include the ancient Nabataean city of Petra in Jordan; the Arabian Desert, among others, that is impacted by overgrazing, wars, improper agricultural practices and other human abuses, oil and gas extraction; and increasingly dilapidated Roman ruins found across and throughout the region.

On the international level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been especially concerned with this topic, advocating a culture for sustainable development. A culture for sustainable development entails placing culture at the center of development policy, and culture includes lands of significance to heritage.<sup>28</sup> UNESCO supports several conventions that work to achieve this goal, including a Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Convention on the Protection of Underwater Heritage, Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Roles of Historic Areas, and the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.<sup>29</sup>

#### **B. History of Topic in the Arab World**

Many of the member states of the Arab League are active and prominent members of the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) and other similar international preservation organizations. In fact, it is so engrained in Arab culture that it is included in an ancient and sacred practice known as *hima*, originating in Arab society over 1,500 years ago. *Hima* is defined as "a system of resource protection in which pastures, trees or grazing lands are declared as

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<sup>26</sup>International Union for the Conservation of Nature. "About IUCN." July 10, 2013. <http://www.iucn.org/about/>

<sup>27</sup>World Land Trust. 2013. <http://www.worldlandtrust.org/>

<sup>28</sup>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. "Culture for Sustainable Development." 2013. <https://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-sustainable-development>.

<sup>29</sup>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. "Culture." 2013. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13649&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=-471.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13649&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=-471.html).

forbidden and access to them and their use is denied by the owner.”<sup>30</sup> It was originally a term used to refer to protected lands belonging to local tribal leaders, but through his teachings, the prophet Muhammad advocated *hima* as a more inclusive ideal in which every member of the community had a stake in the protected land. The holy city of Medina was even designated by Muhammad as *hima*.<sup>31</sup> It was understood, however, that the tradition of *hima* was “community-based [natural resource] management,” and this concept helped to promote the idea of energy, water, and food security in early Arab communities.<sup>32</sup> Today, Arab environmentalists use the term *hima* to advocate for the protection of any area of cultural and/or natural significance.

The Wildlife Middle Eastern News organization deals not only with wildlife conservation and land conservation that are of cultural significance.<sup>33</sup> It is an organization that supports professionals in areas of biology, research, and conservation while also engaging in outreach and awareness efforts to inform the general public about the conservation of wildlife and the lands they inhabit. Wildlife Middle Eastern News distributes newsletters and even hosts some field reports concerning wildlife in various states in the League of Arab States, especially the UAE.<sup>34</sup>

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

On an international scale, UNESCO, the IUCN, the World Land Trust, and other similar organizations have advocated successfully for various culturally significant lands. In addition, the World Heritage Convention provides protection for sites of the highest cultural significance.<sup>35</sup> However, none of the LAS members currently have a site on this list, and there is no comprehensive Arab League-centric mechanism in place to provide for such a designation. Indeed, the Arab League encompasses such a broad spectrum of culturally significant areas that it requires a League-wide mechanism to accomplish Arabic culturally sustainable development. At the same time, it is important to note that many sites of cultural significance to the Arab League must be utilized for their natural resources, and it is of utmost importance that solutions address how member states can approach this problem with an understanding of environmental sustainability.

### **III. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What ecological facets give my country a distinct and valuable heritage?
- How has my country attempted to protect these areas in the past?
- How are protected lands impacted in areas of dangerous and long-term conflict?

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<sup>30</sup> Green Prophet. “Hima: “The Middle East’s Tradition of Environmental Protection.” September 18th, 2010. <http://www.greenprophet.com/2010/09/hima-environmental-protection/>

<sup>31</sup> Walljasper, Jay. “Hima: Reviving the Islamic Tradition of the Commons.” *UTNE Reader*. March 27th, 2013. <http://www.utne.com/environment/hima-islamic-tradition-commons.aspx#axzz2fuYx7Rgg>

<sup>32</sup> Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. “Regional workshop on the “Hybrid” HIMA approach to community based resource management.” *MedWet*. 2013. <http://medwet.org/2011/04/regional-workshop-on-the-%E2%80%9Chybrid-hima-approach-to-community-based-resource-management%E2%80%9D-14th-16th-april/>

<sup>33</sup> Wildlife Middle East News. “Welcome to Wildlife Middle East News.” 2013. <http://www.wmenews.com/content.php?id=3>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> UNESCO. “UNESCO World Heritage Convention”. 2013. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/asia-pacific/>

- How much importance does my country and the Arab League in general place on preserving protected grounds?
- Are there any laws or regulations in my country that regulate what activities can occur on protected areas in order to prevent ecological degradation?
- What defines an area of “invaluable natural and ecological significance” in my country?
- Are citizens aware of what areas in their country are protected?

#### **IV. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- How can awareness of protected lands best be raised?
- Could an opt-in system that member states can utilize to better cooperate and therefore better protect valuable lands be applied to the Arab world?
- How can lands of regional significance be protected during times of conflict, especially trans-border conflicts?
- Is there a way to encourage governments and the people alike to better care for and recognize protected ecological areas?

#### **V. Resources to Review**

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. “Culture for Sustainable Development.” 2013. <https://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-sustainable-development>. (review relevant conventions on sidebar)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. “Culture.” 2013. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13649&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=-471.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13649&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=-471.html). (provides further list of conventions).

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. “Regional workshop on the “Hybrid” HIMA approach to community based resource management.” *MedWet*. 2013. <http://medwet.org/2011/04/regional-workshop-on-the-%E2%80%9Chybrid-hima-approach-to-community-based-resource-management%E2%80%9D-14th-16th-april/>