

For Immediate Release



## **AUB hosts dissemination of key findings of World Bank Flagship report on climate change**

Beirut, Lebanon- 15/05/2012 - The American University of Beirut hosted the dissemination of the major findings of the World Bank Flagship Report "Adaptation to a Changing Climate in the Arab World," produced in partnership with The League of Arab States, on May 15 2012 at College Hall. The event was under the patronage of Lebanese Minister of Environment Nazem El Khoury, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and in partnership with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI-AUB).

"The 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published in 2007 has warned that the warming of the earth's climate system is unequivocal," said El Khoury. "In the past decade the change of our climate system has evolved at a faster pace than was imagined, and the worse is yet to come."

The minister considered that the Arab world had its share of climate disasters and the importance of this report lies in the fact that it summarizes the available literature on the region, identifies gaps and describes policy options.

The regional flagship report, prepared by the World Bank and the League of Arab States, provides information as well as strategic and technical guidance on adaptation to climate change for all 22 Arab countries. It includes the potential impacts of climate change and the adaptation responses needed in key sectors such as water, agriculture, tourism, gender and health, as well as in urban and rural settings. The report was prepared through a wide consultation process with researchers and experts on climate change and related issues from the region.

"The report is a remarkable document prepared by experts," said Rami Khouri IFI director. "The challenge remains at the national and regional levels to generate the actual policy response. IFI-AUB is working with everyone in Lebanon and the region for more effective and integrated policy responses."

Khouri considered that the numerous challenges faced by countries in the region had met with inconsistent policy responses in the past and the real challenge lay not in science but the political decision in making changes.

"It is the time to answer the question 'what kind of a world do we want to live in', said Shompi Sharp, UNDP deputy country director. "The report launched today is an important contribution and raises awareness. Climate degradation can be a source of job opportunities but it can also have the opposite effect."

“The Arab region remains the most vulnerable to climate change,” said Fatma El Mallah former advisor in climate change issues to League of Arab States secretary general. “Drought remains our largest challenge and we are already importing 70 percent of our foodstuffs, incurring an annual \$30 billion food deficit.”

“The Arab world is not only witnessing regime changes but a climate change as well,” said Sateh El-Arnout World Bank senior municipal development specialist. “The warming is 50 percent higher in the Arab world than the other regions of the world. Doing nothing is not an option anymore.”

El-Arnout highlighted that one third of all Arab populations live in coastal cities and are considered the most vulnerable and that in the past year the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has witnessed 120 disasters with each costing around \$1 billion.

The report serves as an umbrella for addressing climate change in the MENA region in three phases: Phase I is the regional flagship study on climate change adaptation in the Arab countries. Phase II proposes that a selected number of country-specific climate change strategies for client governments in the region (on an on-demand basis) be initiated. In Phase III, a number of lending operations would be prepared relating to climate change adaptation and new technology in Arab countries in the areas identified as priorities in Phases I and II.

The World Bank is already providing funding to MENA countries through ongoing technical assistance and lending operations and the Climate Investment Fund (specifically through the Pilot Program for Climate Change and the Clean Technology Fund).

Dorte Verner, World Bank MENA region climate change coordinator, and Ian Noble, World Bank senior advisor on climate change, presented some of the findings of the report, which included contributions from lead authors Hamed Assaf (AUB) and Rima R. Habib (AUB) and commentary by Khouri, Leila Dagher (AUB) and Karim Makdisi (IFI-AUB).

“We consider this as a final consultation and will take your comments into consideration,” said Verner. “The final version has not yet gone to print and once it does it will be made available to all on the internet.”

Noble considered that there was still much work to be done in gathering information, digitizing data and making it all available on the internet. He also called for more weather stations to be built and data shared openly.

The presentation emphasized the likelihood that all economies will be increasingly affected by climate change as time passes. This was illustrated by background case studies prepared for this report on income, livelihoods, well-being, and poverty in Syria, Tunisia, and the Republic of Yemen. Results show that over the next 30-40 years, climate change is likely to lead to a cumulative reduction in household incomes of about 7 percent in Syria and Tunisia, and 24 percent in the Republic of Yemen.

Some of the report highlights stressed that climate change reduces the availability of already overexploited water resources; the Arab region is projected to become hotter and drier as a result of climate change; human health is affected by climate variability and change; women are stakeholders in adaptation and important agents of change; the importance of proper

appraisal and management of ecosystems and their services will increase under climate change; tourism provides opportunities for economic diversification, despite the direct impacts by climate change; climate change exacerbates the challenges of rapid urbanization and settlement in vulnerable areas; agriculture, rural livelihoods, and food security are challenged in a changing climate.

The report also proposed ways in which the Arab countries could take action and reduce their vulnerability in the form of facilitating the development of publicly accessible and reliable information related to climate change, building climate resilience through social protection and other measures, and developing a supportive policy and institutional framework for adaptation.

ENDS

**CAPTION: IFI executive director Rami Khouri speaks during the dissemination of key findings of the World Bank flagship report on climate change.**

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**Note to Editors**

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