

THE BAHRAIN ENVIRONMENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT
FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

The Multilateral Working Group on the Environment of the Middle East peace process initiated at Madrid in October 1991,

Based upon the discussions which have taken place in the Cairo Consultative Group,

Reaffirming the role of the multilateral talks in promoting confidence-building and cooperation among the regional parties in the field of the environment,

Noting relevant international Declarations and instruments on the environment and sustainable development; and recognizing, in particular, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 adopted in 1992,

Recognizing that, in view of the inseparable relationship between humans and their environment, all aspects of the human environment, be they natural or man-made, are essential to the well-being and the enjoyment of basic human life,

Convinced of the need for the protection and conservation of the environment and natural resources in the region,

Recognizing that in view of transboundary effects of many environmental problems, each party needs to take into consideration effects upon other parties in pursuing its own developmental and environmental policy,

Also recognizing the need for passing on to the future generations of the region a safe, sound and healthy environment as well as the fruits of economic development,

Recognizing the unique environmental characteristics to the Middle East,

Declares as follows:

** This document was endorsed by the Middle East Peace Process Environmental Working Group on October 25th, 1994 in Bahrain*

PRINCIPLES

1. The regional parties proclaim the following principles:

(1) Natural resources of the region should be utilized on a sustainable basis, and unique environmental resources to the region should be preserved.

(2) The parties will strive for a fair and just utilization and coordinated management policies of the shared natural resources in the region.

(3) The parties have the right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other parties.

(4) The parties have the responsibility to avoid activities of adverse effect and risks to the environmental security in the region.

(5) Economic development should be in harmony with the protection and conservation of the environment, including preservation of ecological balance and safety of human health and well being. The parties will promote cooperation in the protection and conservation of the environment.

(6) A comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.

(7) Regional parties will cooperate and seek the cooperation of other parties in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the people in the region.

(8) Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens and social sectors, at the relevant level. The parties shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available.

GUIDELINES

2. In order to pursue policies in accordance with the Principles, the regional parties should:

(a) enact effective environmental legislation. Environmental standards, management objectives and priorities should reflect the state of the environment in the Middle East, paying due consideration to geographical, topographical, and meteorological conditions as well as regional environmental problems such as water, air and marine pollution, waste management, desertification and nature conservation.

(b) develop and use environmental management tools such as environmental impact assessment, environmental risk management and monitoring systems, for domestic as well as transboundary impacts; in case of projects with possible transboundary effects, all regional parties involved should endeavour to cooperate on an environment impact assessment.

(c) strive for capacity building and human resource development, through environmental training and education.

(d) facilitate and encourage public awareness to broaden the basis for enlightened opinions and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in protecting and improving the environment.

(e) coordinate their environmental policies with one another and cooperate in protecting the over-all environment in the region in good faith and in a spirit of partnership.

(f) cooperate in promoting appropriate technology and capability to tackle environmental issues by joint projects, joint research and other activities where appropriate; facilitate the transfer of technology, know-how, and information; notify one another of environmental situations that have regional or transboundary impacts.

(g) endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

(h) resolve all their environmental disputes peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the UN Charter and in conformity with relevant provisions of international law and declarations.

JOINT ACTIONS

3. The regional parties will join forces for the environmental protection and conservation and begin to work in the following fields:

Water:

Protection of water quality should be given a top priority. Low precipitation in the region makes it extremely important to maintain the quality of surface and ground water for both economic activities and human consumption.

Marine and coastal environment:

The sea surfaces of the Middle East are both economic and environmental assets for the regional parties. They are most vulnerable to pollution, from land base sources and maritime activities in particular. It is essential to apply advanced standards to eliminate these sources of pollution, and to cooperate in all possible ways to assure protection of coasts and biodiversity in waters.

Air:

Economic activities particularly in the industrial, energy and transport sectors are main sources for air pollution in the Middle East. Measures to prevent the degradation of air quality need to be taken.

Waste management:

With rising standards and increasing economic activity, the regional parties may have to dispose of increasing amounts of waste in the future. The parties will need to: minimize waste, enact effective regulations for proper treatment, recycling and protection measures, and ensure safe waste preparedness arrangements in the region. Sewage, as a potential important resource, should be collected and treated to be reused for various purposes.

Desertification:

The Middle East region is among those threatened by land degradation including desertification, and preventive measures are urgently needed. To combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in particular, effective cooperative actions are indispensable.

A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

4. The parties recognize the need for regional cooperation in the field of environment in the Middle East. The parties will work towards the development of an appropriate framework for regional cooperation in the environmental area. Towards this end, it is important that the regional parties provide timely and early notification and relevant information on environmental situations that have regional impacts on potentially affected parties.

EXTRA-REGIONAL ASSISTANCE

5. The extra-regional parties, including international organization, are invited to assist the regional parties in their endeavours to achieve the goals and objectives of this Code.

PERIODIC REVIEW

6. This Code should be brought to the attention of all concerned parties so that they assume their share of responsibility, individually or jointly to ensure that the objectives of the Code are met. The parties will periodically assess the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct and revise it as appropriate.

End.