

15 April 2018, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia – Arab Leaders, during the Summit of the Arab League convened in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on 15 April 2018, adopted the Arab strategy on health and the environment and its strategic action guideline (2017–2030).

Developed by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and WHO Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA), and endorsed by all Arab States through the Council of Arab Health Ministers and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, the implementation of the strategy and its strategic action guideline will be followed-up jointly by the two Arab ministerial councils.

WHO estimates that environmental degradation is causing over 628 000 premature fatalities annually and 24 million disability adjusted life-years (DALYs), representing 23% of total deaths in the Arab Region and increasing to 26% in children under five years of age. The Arab Strategy outlines nine environmental health priorities in the following areas:

- Water, sanitation and health
- Air pollution
- Food safety
- Chemical safety
- Waste management and environmental health services
- Environmental health emergency management
- Climate change and health
- Sustainable development and health
- Occupational health and safety.

In a collaborative multi-agency strategic approach, the ministries of health and ministries of environment in the Arab region will be assuming the roles of stewarding broker and interlocutor in partnership with other stakeholders; emphasizing the leadership of the public health and environmental sectors in terms of governance and surveillance responsibilities, as well as catalyzing relevant sectors to take preventive actions and corrective interventions. The Arab League, WHO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will provide technical support to Arab States in this regards.

Dr Jaouad Mahjour, WHO Regional Director a.i. stated: “This is indeed very good news; and CEHA is geared to support our Member States in implementing this ecological-health strategy,

to reduce the morbidity and mortality attributable to environmental risk factors in the Arab Region and beyond”.

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