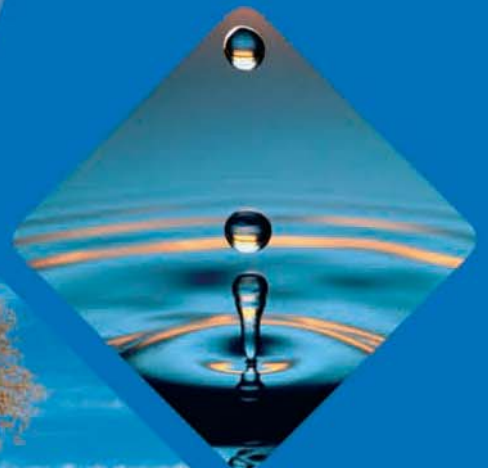


2008 Report of the Arab Forum for Environment and Development

# ARAB ENVIRONMENT FUTURE CHALLENGES

EDITED BY: **MOSTAFA K. TOLBA** AND **NAJIB W. SAAB**



المنتدى العربي للبيئة والتنمية  
ARAB FORUM FOR  
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT



# Arab Environment: Future Challenges

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## Preface

*Arab Environment: Future Challenges* is the first annual report produced by the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED). The policy-oriented report is designed to evaluate the progress made towards the realization of sustainable development goals and a good environmental quality. It also examines the Arab contribution to global environmental endeavours.

AFED was proclaimed as a regional non-governmental organization in June 2006, at the conclusion of a conference on Public Opinion and the Environment, organized in Beirut, Lebanon, by *Al-Bia Wal-Tanmia* (Environment & Development) magazine. The conference deliberated on the results of a pan-Arab survey tracing the environmental views of the public in Arab countries. The outcome has been reflected in AFED's mandate, which gave its work a demand-driven impetus. AFED aims at encouraging Arab societies to protect the environment and use natural resources in a sensible manner, ultimately resulting in sustainable development. The Organization has embarked on a wide ranging programme of activities, the main one being an independent periodic report on the status of Arab environment. The present report launches a series of other reports to follow, each of which will concentrate on specific topics of particular significance to the Arab region.

Alongside tackling major local and global issues and challenges, the outcome of the report is also meant to serve as a baseline for the state of Arab environment, in a manner that will allow measuring progress in the future. It has been developed to set benchmarks, by means of evaluating the state of the environment under different sectors. Moreover, the AFED report is meant to be independent, reflecting the views of the civil society, by relying on the wide participation of researchers and academic institutions, in consultation with active sectors of the society, while ensuring synergy with other initiatives.

The approach to preparing the report has been to build on existing knowledge of environmental issues. It stresses partnerships, takes advantage of ongoing monitoring and research. It promotes the incorporation of the traditional approach of a State of the Environment report into the design of policy-driven, science-based assessments, stressing major issues and challenges.

Based on analysis of the best data available, the report targets the general public as well as policy and decision makers in public and private sectors. Data has been collected from reliable national and international sources, and cross-checked with experts and research institutions. One of the main constraints in preparing this report has been a lack of reliable and coherent national data in various sectors. To overcome this difficulty, authors of the different chapters were selected from among experts with extensive experience in their research areas, who could rely

on first-hand information directly from the field. Wherever possible, authors carried out field surveys to collect accurate and up-to-date data. Some countries of the region are not included in certain tables due to lack of data. Where data gaps still persist, the report tries to identify them in view of triggering further field and laboratory research, not only to collect and collate existing data but to establish permanent reliable monitoring centres and databases.

The Arab Environment Report attempts to answer five key questions:

1. How are environmental conditions in the Arab world changing?
2. What are the causes of environmental deterioration, and how is it linked to human activities and other stresses?
3. Why is environment a significant issue to the Arab world?
4. What is being done about it? How is society responding to the issues through public and private initiatives?
5. Are the measures taken to limit environmental degradation and deterioration of ecosystems enough?

The report provides an easily understood overview of environmental issues for the non-scientist without frustrating the scientific accuracy of the issues discussed.

The editors wish to thank all of those who supported this initiative, and specifically Dr. Mohamed Kassas, who was a source of inspiration from the outset, alongside his unrelenting contribution to all phases of the job, from planning, to setting clear goals and appraising the outcome. Thanks are also due to Dr. Essam El Hinnawy who made an outstanding effort in designing the structure of this report. Our special thanks go to the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), which backed this project from its inception. Finally, we thank the team of *Environment & Development* magazine, whose efforts made the production of this report in its final form possible in record time and with limited budget.

*The Editors*

**© 2008 Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED)**

Published with *Technical Publications* and *Environment & Development* magazine

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http://www.afedonline.org

The preparation of this report was facilitated through a grant from the **OPEC Fund for International Development**.

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AFED and respective authors are solely responsible for opinions expressed in this report. The contents are based on best available data. Sponsors and supporting organizations do not necessarily endorse the views expressed in this report.

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**Design:** Brand 360°

**Printing:** Chemaly & Chemaly, Beirut

**Photos:** *Environment & Development* magazine archive. Reuters: pages 2,63,135,141, 217. UNEP: pages 45,96,112,132,160. Fares Jammal: pages 42,75. Naomi Toyoda: pages 159,168.

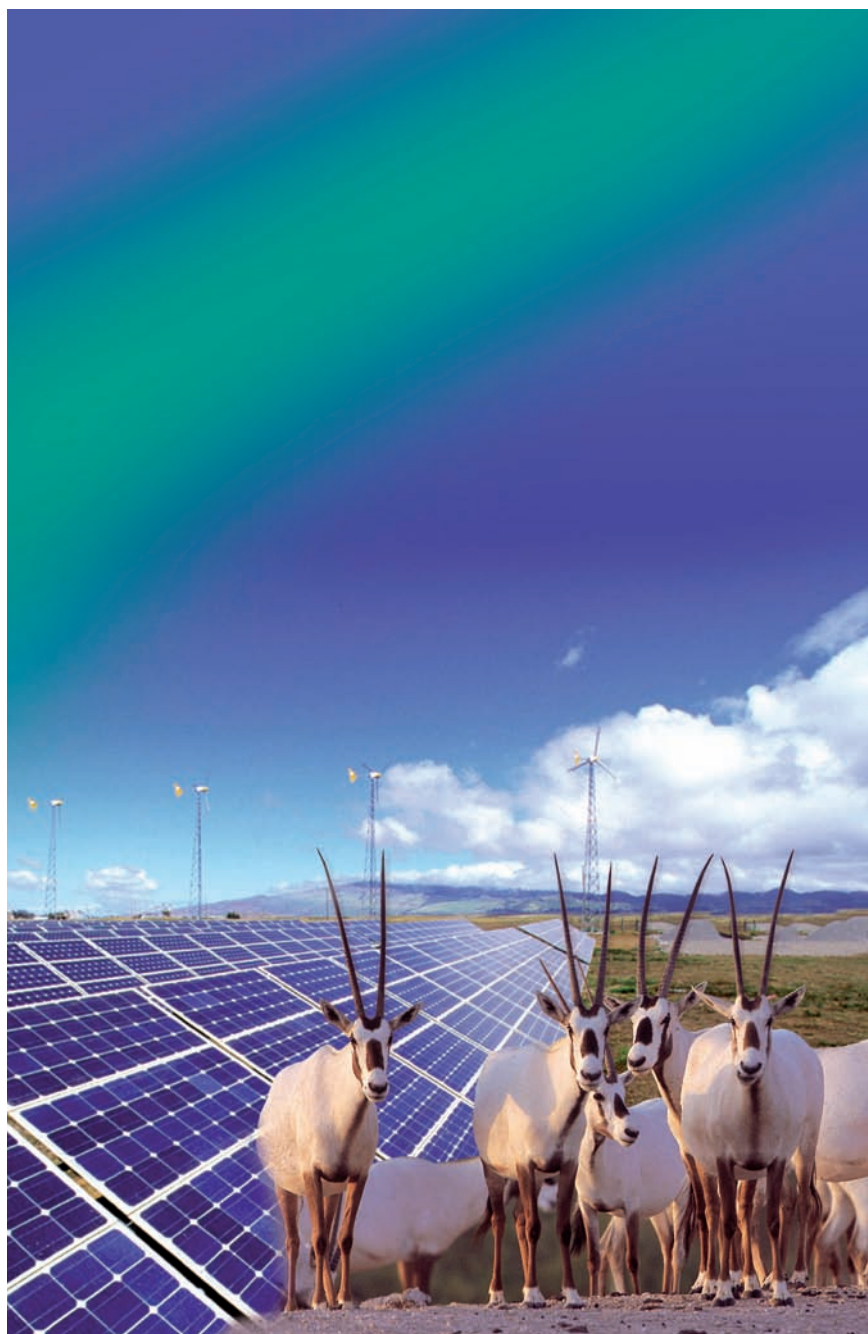
ISBN: 9953-437-24-6



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Arab Environment: Future Challenges

MOSTAFA K. TOLBA AND NAJIB W. SAAB



## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is clear that the most salient issue facing the world today is that of the environment. Environmental problems have featured heavily in scientific warnings, political agendas, public concern, and media attention. The Arab region is not isolated from the rest of the world when it comes to this topic. This report seeks to highlight in a holistic manner the most important environmental issues facing the Arab world, and attempts to offer advice for policymakers, citizens, scientific and academic institutions, and the media on how to mitigate the dangers created by environmental degradation.

The Arab world has undergone huge changes in the last century. Its population has risen from below 50 million a century ago to over 325 million today. During this same period, the environment has deteriorated and natural resources have dwindled, due to development patterns which were largely unsustainable. In most cases, policies were overwhelmingly sets of provisional short-term measures, meant to tackle momentary challenges rather than engage in long-term planning.

Some parts of the region have seen unprecedented growth, bringing both economic and social prosperity to millions of Arabs during the last decades, thanks, largely, to the rising income from oil. Has this economic development, however, come at a cost? Can the patterns of development which some Arab countries are experiencing continue, while sustaining livelihood and quality of life for future generations? We doubt.

Today, the state of the Arab environment stands at a pivotal juncture, with numerous environmental problems both current and imminent threatening the region. At the same time, awareness of the issues, as well as signs of political and social willingness to act, provide hope for timely intervention.

This report, the first of its kind to be compiled and authored by independent experts from across the Arab region, offers an overview of the state of the environment in the Arab world, highlighting environmental challenges, social, political, and demographic trends, progress in regional and sub-regional cooperation, and recommendations for future action.

## THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

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