

Global Network for Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECPnet) Arab Regional Chapter Meeting

17 October 2016 – Barcelona, Spain

Summary of Discussions

Opening

The Regional Executive for RECPnet's Arab Regional Chapter opened the meeting with words of thanks to the Chapter Members in attendance and the Patron Agencies, indicating that this meeting was a good occasion to receive updates on activities having taken place in the region over the last year, and to frame future activities under the RECPnet Work Plan.

The Patron Agencies – UNEP and UNIDO – expressed their hope that the meeting would lead to an evaluation of the process of re-thinking the Chapter's activities and ambitions, which was begun at the 3rd Members' Assembly in Davos in late 2015, and that the meeting would help crystallize the expectations which Members had of RECPnet to further aid networking and RECP promotion in the region.

Secretariat Update

The RECPnet Secretariat, hosted at UNIDO, provided the Chapter's Members with an overview of the *Operational Strategy for RECPnet 2015-2020* and the RECPnet Work Plan 2016. The basic pillars of the Operational Strategy were reviewed, including the related Work Plan items, as adopted by the Executive Committee in early 2016. Finally, the status of the various Work Plan items was provided.

The Secretariat next briefed Chapter Members on the roles and responsibilities inherent in membership of the network. Amongst the various rights and obligations of membership, the status of membership renewals and fee payments was focused on.

The Operational Strategy and Work Plan were discussed by the meeting's participants, with emphasis being placed on how to ensure that RECPnet Members take advantage of business opportunities that are available to them. Some approaches suggested included establishing RECPnet Members' primacy in specific topics, such as chemicals management or waste management; holding regional-level meetings and workshops on particular topics in order to introduce RECPnet Members to local stakeholders; establishing Members as regional centres of excellence; and, directly contacting relevant government focal points.

The roles of the Patron Agencies and Secretariat were also discussed in terms of enabling business opportunities for the network. Different ways in which the Patron Agencies facilitated business opportunities were discussed, including the establishment of RECPnet Members as priority contractors for activities carried out under the *Joint UNIDO-UNEP Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production Programme in Developing and Transition Economies*; circulating tenders and calls for proposal to Members via e-mail, online media channels and the RECPnet Knowledge Management System (KMS); registration with partner initiatives such as the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) [<https://www.ctc-n.org/about-ctcn/join-us>] and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Clearinghouse [<http://www.scpclearinghouse.org/register.html>].

In light of the fact that not all Members appeared aware of the opportunities being communicated by the Secretariat, it was decided to trial a periodic e-mail update to Chapter Members, linking to the KMS as a one-stop repository for all relevant business opportunities. The notion of creating WhatsApp groups for this purpose was also considered.

It was noted that a number of Work Plan items involve the KMS; to this end, the Regional KMS Coordinator emphasized that the system was in need of fundamental improvements before the related Work Plan

objectives could be achieved, and before the terms of the contract of the Regional KMS Coordinator could be fulfilled. The responsibility for improving the technical infrastructure of the KMS was seen as lying with the Patron Agencies, in particular UNIDO.

Lastly, the positioning of RECPnet Members vis-à-vis government stakeholders was seen as particularly important and useful. Efforts undertaken by the Patron Agencies were outlined, but it was recognized that further work needed to be done in order to better represent RECPnet to national governments. Amongst the requirements identified, was the need for Patron Agencies as well as RECPnet Members to be able to represent the impact of RECPnet on global industry. This could take the form of case-by-case examples, or aggregate impact figures. In this respect, the need for Members to continuously provide the Secretariat with useful information was stressed. These efforts would also need to be accompanied by targeted capacity- and competency-building for RECPnet Members, stemming from the fact that most Members do not have a strong skill set related to either marketing/communications, and/or project proposal development.

RECPnet and the 2030 Agenda

UNEP next delivered a presentation on the potential role of RECPnet as a leading implementation partner for key aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The presentation was anchored by the position paper developed by UNEP entitled: *The RECPnet We Want: Aligning the Global Network with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which had been circulated amongst the Executive Committee of RECPnet for feedback and is planned to shortly be released to RECPnet's membership.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their 169 associated targets and 230 global indicators were introduced, with emphasis being placed on the fact that sustainable consumption and production – which is at the core of RECPnet's service delivery – is highly connected to all other goals and targets within the architecture of the SDGs. In this respect, two points were made clear: firstly, it is of importance for RECPnet members to consider themselves - and to convey to their stakeholders that they are - partners for their national governments to help attain the SDGs. Secondly, brokering partnerships between various stakeholders, such as government, industry and civil society, could provide a clear niche for RECPnet members within the 2030 Agenda.

On the national level, RECPnet members can sharpen their competitive edge by emphasizing their track record in RECP service provision, and that they provide an interface to the private sector, in particular local businesses and SMEs. This was seen as particularly important, given that the private sector is widely considered to be central in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It was furthermore shown how the 2030 Agenda already maps onto the core competencies of RECPnet members as it is. With further capacity and skills building, RECPnet members could also reach into other dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, and provide reliable services there in the future. Generally, the current relationship of RECPnet to the 2030 Agenda was seen as follows:

1. The overarching policy framework set by the 2030 Agenda is the same that led to the formulation of the RECP Programme and the creation of RECPnet;
2. RECPnet can be a key transmission chain between government-level commitments and the concrete implementation of behavioural changes in the private sector;
3. The overall ambition of the SDGs and the CoP21 agreements creates a strong and growing need for the tools and services that RECPnet provides to the private sector across the globe.

Arab Regional Chapter Status Update

The next segment of the meeting focused on providing updates from the Regional Chapter's members on their most recent activities, with a focus on reporting progress and identifying opportunities for enhanced collaboration in the region. Guest participants of the Regional Chapter meeting were also invited to contribute to this segment to present their profile, achievements and what they see as opportunities for collaboration on RECP promotion in the region.

National Centre of Cleaner Technologies Production, Algeria

The National Centre of Cleaner Technologies Production, based in Algeria, introduced various knowledge management and capacity building activities which it is undertaking in-country. These include an online portal and related information material for POPs-related activities in line with the centre's role as Regional Centre for the Stockholm Convention, the distribution of a quarterly newsletter, participation in key events, as well as the training of over 2,000 'Delegates for Environment' in Algerian manufacturing companies based on a comprehensive programme developed by the centre. Additionally, the centre undertakes numerous traditional environmental studies and RECP audits in response to requests from industry. The centre also presented case studies which illustrated its work the Algerian lubricants sector, juice fabricants, electrical utilizes companies and agro-industrial enterprises.

For the future, the centre sees training activities and the heightening of the uptake of RECP at the country level as priority activities. RECP-related international cooperation activities, as well as the organization of national RECP-themed events are foreseen. The centre further calls for a simplification of the reporting burden placed on members by the RECPnet Secretariat, so as to improve the rate of response and effectiveness of the data gathered. In addition, it seeks to strengthen and diversify communication channels with members and improve coordination with Regional Centres of international environmental conventions, such as the Stockholm Convention.

Egypt National Cleaner Production Centre

The activities of the Egypt NCPC focus on five priority areas, namely: 1) Technical Assistance in the form of RECP assessments, energy efficiency and renewable energy and industrial chemicals management; 2) Industrial Waste Management, Recycling and Zero Waste involving transfer and implementation of environmentally sound technologies and entrepreneurship promotion ; 3) Financial Assistance to help Egyptian industry obtain funding from relevant sources; 4) Applied Training Programmes featuring on-the-job training; and 5) Joint National and International Projects. Within these areas, the centre is currently running 12 projects, ranging from promoting the utilization of solar energy, through industrial waste management, to benchmarking RECP in Egyptian industry.

On a regional level, the centre is lending support to the establishment of RECP centres in Kuwait, Libya and Sudan, as well as collaborating on RECP promotion in Jordan and leading training on renewable energy and chemicals management in Ethiopia, Uganda and UR Tanzania. In addition, the centre is conducting RECP policy advocacy in Egypt at the national and local levels, and carrying out capacity building activities for its staff.

Royal Scientific Society Jordan – Cleaner Production Unit

The Cleaner Production Unit of the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan presented its background and history, and outlined its main ongoing RECP projects, which currently consist of SwitchMed / Med Test II; Eco-Innovative Strategies for Chemical Risk Reduction; and Life Cycle Assessment. Recent activities include the SME Partnership for Sound Management of Harmful Substances and Hazardous Waste, including RECP outreach and advocacy activities; Green Financing, together with Agence Francaise de Developpement; and the establishment of a Green Help Desk. In addition, the centre has been carrying out RECP information dissemination and networking activities on a regional level, and has also taken part in workshops, seminars and training on RECP-relevant topics. The centre also organized various in-person and online workshops and training courses aimed at mainstreaming RECP in industry.

The centre identified lifecycle analysis, carbon footprinting, responsible production, eco-innovation and chemicals hazard reduction as good opportunities for regional collaboration between Chapter Members. Possibilities for exchange of staff and know-how with other centres in the region were also identified, as well as the chance to hold regional workshops and trainings. The support of the Patron Agencies and Secretariat

was encouraged in order to help identify opportunities to implement RECP projects for international organizations; facilitate and support meetings, trainings and capacity building activities; and, continue to promote RECP and establish new centres, while facilitating the exchange of information amongst members of RECPnet.

Tunis International Center for Environmental Technologies (CITET)

The Tunis International Center for Environmental Technologies (CITET) presented their centre's history and mandate and governing strategic plan, as well as introducing some of its current flagship projects. These projects included the establishment of the Tunisian Ecolabel programme; the specification of Environmental and Health Declarations for products; supporting enterprises comply with environmental regulatory requirements; establishing a national energy management system in line with ISO 50001; promoting the transfer of environmentally sound technologies under the TEST programme; supporting competitiveness through the value chain in the textile and clothing sectors; creation of a regional training center for carbon assessment; introducing a Tunisian CSR label; and, conducting Green Entrepreneurs training programme in Tunisia.

The centre's outlook revolves around its Strategic Plan (2014-2019) which aims to position CITET as a sustainable partner for eco-innovation. This strategy places the centre at the heart of innovative approaches, in connection with strategic partners and as an international focal point for eco-innovation and RECP-related approaches. The tools used to this end include technology diffusion, technology monitoring and training and capacity building. These will be used to full a three-sided mission, namely to be a partner in the development of public policies, to support technological innovations and to increase the competitiveness of enterprises.

Palestine Academy for Science and Technology (PALAST)

Lastly, the Palestine Academy for Science and Technology (PALAST) provided an introduction of its centre and its work, as a guest participant of the Arab Regional Chapter Meeting. PALAST had already submitted an application for membership in RECPnet, which was under review at the time of the meeting by the RECPnet Executive Committee.

PALAST was established as a scientific organization mandated to propose policies on issues relating science, technology and innovation. It maintains a dual legal presence in both Israel as well as in the State of Palestine, with offices in Ramallah, Jerusalem and in Gaza. PALAST represents the State of Palestine in eight scientific consortia and works with all national ministries on projects related to sustainable development, such as with: the water authority (for legal and human rights issues, but also research on technical management of water resources); the environmental authority (on strengthening the Palestinian environmental action plan, preparation of projects on solid waste management and capacity building); the energy authority (on the development and implementation of the Palestinian energy action plan). PALAST also helped draft the State of Palestine's first environmental law - an environmental impact assessment policy. Additionally, the centre conducts environmental advocacy and outreach efforts to make industry aware of RECP.

The centre also works on a number of RECP-related projects. Through its umbrella organization, the centre has implemented EU-funded projects, has established a science, technology and innovation observatory in the State of Palestine, and has worked with a number of well-known companies on ISD 14000 implementation. More recently, PALAST is working on projects under the TEST Programme addressing the food and beverages sector in the State of Palestine, where demonstrations are being carried out in ten companies. The centre is also planning to hold an international conference at the conclusion of the TEST project. The work of the centre has contributed to raising the profile of RECP, in particular amongst industry associations and unions.

Regional Status Quo and Outlook

Regional Workshop on the Environmental Upgrading of Enterprises

As an example of possible forms of regional cooperation, CITET Tunisia provided a summary of a regional workshop it had organized from 20 to 22 September 2016, in Tunis, for nine francophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to strengthen South-South cooperation through the joint development of RECP-related projects. The countries that took part were: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

The workshop followed a set format geared toward project development, wherein a presentation of CITET's areas of expertise and services was followed by presentations of the economic, environmental and social context of participating countries. These revolved around the country's status quo, its national regulatory and policy context, and an overview of projects and project partners in-country. A presentation of potential funding and collaboration opportunities followed, with the remainder of the workshop dedicated to interactive working groups involving CITET staff and country representatives. These working groups determined a particular course of action for each country by conducting a SWOT analysis, identifying strategic needs and conditions for environmental upgrading, identifying priority activities to allow environmental upgrading in the short and medium term, developing project templates. As a result, 22 project proposals were identified amongst the participants, focusing on RECP training and capacity building; technical assistance for RECP pilot projects; technical support and technology transfer for waste management and valorization. An additional outcome of the workshop was the identified need to establish RECP centres in Cameroon and Guinea.

Based on the description of the workshop and its result, the RECPnet Arab Chapter discussed the opportunities which such a mode of engagement could present to accelerate activities in the Chapter and potentially help expand it. In particular, the notion of approaching the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) – which was a partner in the development and execution of the workshop – was discussed. While recognizing that the IDB had particular funding conditions, it was agreed to consider it as a potential source of funding, along with other donors, in the planning of the next phase of the *Joint UNIDO-UNEP Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production Programme in Developing and Transition Economies*.

Working Group – Development of a Strategy for the Arab Region

Under the facilitation of UNEP, the final segment of the RECPnet Arab Regional Chapter Meeting dealt with isolating concrete action areas for the short term, which would enable a more effective form of collaboration within the Chapter going forward. To this end, two questions were focused on:

- 1) How to make communication within the Chapter, and with the Patron Agencies/Secretariat, more effective in the time between in-person meetings?
- 2) Which strategic priorities/topics should the Chapter focus its collective efforts on over next 12 months?

Improving Regular Communication

The lack of responsiveness within the Chapter to messages from the Regional Executive, as well as from the Secretariat, was seen as hindering effective intra-regional cooperation under RECPnet. A possible reason for this was the apparent dilution of responsibilities in some centres between managerial and technical staff when it comes to coverage of RECPnet-related issues. Social media and instant messaging services (in particular WhatsApp and LinkedIn) were recognized by the Chapter as offering a potential solution to this issue. It was proposed to set up targeted groups involving nominated individuals from each Chapter member. To this end,

the Secretariat asked members to provide two sets of contacts: 1) strategic/managerial level (with mobile phone numbers) and 2) technical/operational contacts. While this information is initially provided by all members through their application form, in many cases the information provided at the start of the membership period is no longer up to date.

Beyond the targeted communication groups, it was however agreed that e-mails still pose the central means of communication to Chapter members, in particular from the Patron Agencies and Secretariat. It was suggested that key information be sent out by e-mail, as before, but that these be supplemented by notifications sent through instant messaging apps like WhatsApp. It was further proposed to send a regular e-mail update to all Chapter members, so as to establish a dedicated and reliable channel of communication and information between the Patron Agencies and the Chapter members for things such as recent activities, tenders, events and the like. Additionally, some information sent by the Secretariat was deemed as being relevant to all Chapter members and all personnel in each member organization. In this connection, the Secretariat emphasized the possibility for members and their staff to follow RECPnet's social media channels, such as Twitter, where general-interest information is continuously posted.

The RECPnet KMS was also addressed as an important communications tool, however, a number of issues were identified which inhibited its more widespread use. Amongst these, was the problem that not enough RECPnet members were uploading information to the KMS, for an apparent lack of incentives to do so. Possible solutions were seen as rewarding the best case study or knowledge product by issuing sponsorships to take part in RECP-relevant global forum events; uploading an initial repository of project outcomes and tools; and, organizing targeted workshops to raise the profile of the KMS and bring businesses and external participants on board. It was also agreed that a number of improvements to the KMS software would be required before a larger number of users would feel comfortable using the KMS. This posed a dilemma however, since a critical mass of users would be required in order to justify funding for the further development and improvement of the KMS software.

Possible incentives for using the KMS which Chapter members identified included: a common list of project proposals; an events calendar, including business-to-business brokerage events; development of a network for national expertise; collaborative space to ask and answer technical queries; business opportunities and tenders; RECP benchmarks; and information on technology and businesses.

Selection of Strategic Priorities for the Chapter

The Regional Chapter next turned to identifying one or two main priority issues which would be addressed via collective efforts over the next 12 months. A key activity agreed on in this connection was the creation of a so-called 'experts marketplace' in which the expertise and/or competencies of each member is captured and represented – via a web-based solution – to interested donors and stakeholders. This would serve to promote members to a global audience, but also help identify locally available capacities for upcoming or ongoing projects or expert exchange programmes. Each member's expertise could be reflected for instance via individual, personal, profiles for each centre's technical staff, or by collective, organizational, profiles summarizing competencies. In either case, contact would always need to be established through the respective RECPnet member to ensure personnel retention is not undermined by the system in place.

In order to begin implementing this solution in the Arab Regional Chapter of RECPnet, it was agreed that each Chapter member would provide a one-page bullet-point description of their competencies. This would aim to capture the particular areas of expertise of each member in addition to basic RECP competencies. As a first step, this information would be integrated in each member's profile on the official RECPnet website www.recpnet.org.

A second priority which was identified was improving the public representation of the Chapter vis-à-vis stakeholders and donors. This was particularly relevant given the impression that International Financial Institutions and other potential donors were taking closer note of RECP activities in the region. The notion of preparing a common project proposal from the Regional Chapter was discussed, but it was noted that such



proposals are only worth the time and resources invested when concrete applications or funding windows are being targets. Ultimately, it was agreed that as a first step, a common presentation template and core information material was needed for meetings with interested parties to present what the Regional Chapters do, as well as what the scope of their members' activities on the ground is. The Secretariat offered to circulate a common presentation template outline, which members would be encouraged to complete with country- and member-specific information.

Closing Session

In closing the Arab Regional Chapter Meeting, the Regional Executive thanked all participants and expressed the sentiment that the spirit of collaboration be carried forward into the future work of the Chapter. It was noted that a number of challenges had beset this Chapter throughout the year, however, the foundation was laid at this meeting for a renewed engagement amongst its members, based on a few, concrete, actions that members could easily carry out.

Annex 1 - List of Participants

1. Ms. Amel JRAD
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Regional Executive, RECPnet ARB Regional Chapter
2. Ms. Bouchra HAMOUD
Engineer, National Centre of Cleaner Technologies Production, Algeria
3. Mr. Ali ABO SENA
Director, Egypt National Cleaner Production Centre
4. Mr. Rafat ASSI
Director, Royal Scientific Society Jordan – Cleaner Production Unit
5. Ms. Nawel MEJIRI
KMS Regional Coordinator, Tunis International Center for Environmental Technologies (CITET)
6. Mr. Imad KHATIB
Director General, Palestine Academy for Science and Technology (PALAST)
7. Ms. Elisa TONDA
Head, Responsible Industry and Value Chain Unit, UNEP
8. Ms. Carolina GONZALEZ
Industrial Development Officer, UNIDO
9. Mr. Michael FEGERL
RECP KMS Specialist, UNIDO
10. Mr. Hassan MEHDI
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