



برنامج الأمم المتحدة  
للبيئة  
United Nations Environment Programme  
المكتب الإقليمي لغرب آسيا  
Regional Office for West Asia



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Regional Civil Society Consultation Meeting for West Asia and Sub-Regional Workshop on Public Participation in the Environmental Impact Assessment Process**

**(3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>) November 2008, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman**

**Muscat, Oman 3 November 2008** – Under the patronage of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs in Oman, the United Nations Environment Programme - Regional Office of West Asia will hold the 8th Regional Civil Society Consultation Meeting on the 3-4th November, 2008 in Muscat. A Sub-Regional Workshop on Public Participation in the Environmental Impact Assessment Process will be held back-to-back to the Consultation Meeting. Both meetings held in Oman are being organized in close cooperation with the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation and the Environment Society of Oman.

The Regional Civil Society Meeting is one of six regional forums organized by UNEP to prepare for the Tenth Global Civil Society Forum (10<sup>th</sup> GCSF) which will be held on 13 February 2009 prior to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum (GC/GMEF), taking place on 16-20th February 2009, in Nairobi.

30 representatives from various non-governmental organizations, consultation groups, and experts from the region will participate in the Meeting.

The Regional Civil Society Meeting provides a unique opportunity for civil society at the regional level to provide their views on Climate Change and its challenges in the region, Chemical Management and Mercury, as well as Globalization and the Environment.

UNEP/ROWA has also begun implementing a Project on Capacity Building in Environmental Impact Assessment and Promotion of Public Participation in West Asia, which is being funded by the United Nations Development Account. The objective of the programme is to build capacity in West Asia in

reviewing EIA's both by the regulatory agencies and Civil Society Organizations to ensure the environmental sustainability of development projects in the region as a contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The project began its implementation in January 2008 with a Regional Start-Up Meeting involving National Focal Points and relevant organizations in the region to introduce the project, outline how it will be implemented and secure the support of National Focal Points and relevant organizations.

The Sub-Regional Workshop taking place in Oman will focus on raising awareness of the mechanisms of public participation within the EIA process (what to look for when reviewing EIA's and how to present comments to the relevant authorities in an appropriate manner) and will also include case studies of EIA implementation in the Region. This Sub-Regional Workshop is for Civil Society Organizations within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, and a similar one will be held in early 2009 for the Mashreq Region.

Both meetings are being planned with the non-governmental organisation Environment Society of Oman (ESO). Since 2004, the ESO has been promoting environmental awareness and action, empowering the public to be actively involved in the protection of the natural environment of Oman. UNEP is appreciative of the efforts and dedication of the members of the ESO in promoting and assisting UNEP in organizing the logistical arrangements for the meetings.

UNEP is grateful to the Origin Oman campaign, a new Omani government initiative to promote and support local products and services, for its generous sponsorship of the logistical arrangements for the meetings and for hosting a dinner for the participants and organizers of the meetings. The campaign aims to encourage consumers, businesses, and institutional buyers to think, buy, and eat local. Not only does it help every resident promote the Sultanate's products and services, it also creates employment opportunities as well as reduces the carbon emissions by reducing imports from outside the country.

Dr. Habib El-Habr, Director and Regional Representative of UNEP/Regional Office for West Asia, will open the Meeting at 9:00 am on the 3rd of November at the Ramada Hotel, Muscat.

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