



REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

ARAB STATES



THE STATE OF CLIMATE AMBITION

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INTRODUCTION

The Arab States region is home to 394 million people across 19 countries and one territory¹. Arab countries achieved significant development gains – especially in health and education – after independence. However, for most countries in the Arab States region, these gains have been hindered by war, protracted conflicts, and fragility that have led to a slowdown in economic growth, unstable social conditions, and inequalities in living standards. The region is highly heterogeneous in terms of income per capita; including four Least Developed Countries alongside several of the world’s biggest oil and gas producers, and is responsible for 5.41 percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions². Large differences exist among countries in terms of access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy. For decades, subsidies – especially for energy – have been used to stimulate growth and support access to energy but are proving costly in economic and environmental terms. Macroeconomic instability, a lack of economic diversification, migration, conflict, and security risks – coupled with the economic exclusion of large segments of the population – are major challenges that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable sectors of society. Regional

unemployment averages 10 percent – almost double the world average – and disproportionately affects young people, at 25 percent, and women, who earn only 21 percent of the income of men³.

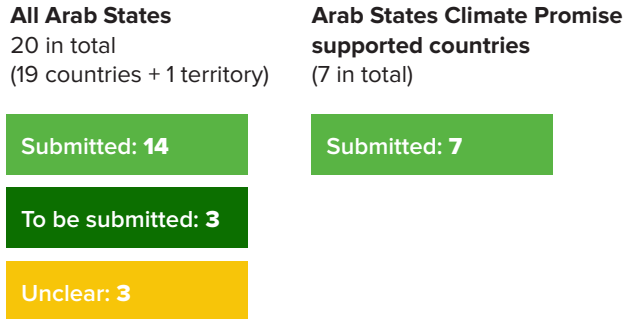
Coupled with scarce and fragile natural resources and population growth, climate change has already been exacerbating environmental vulnerabilities and impacting overall human development in the region. Water stress affects 84 percent of people⁴, and climate change is projected to further decrease mean rainfall and reduce renewable water resources, including groundwater resources which are already heavily exploited across the region⁵. The situation is worsened with shrinking arable land (declining by upwards of 45 percent in more than half the countries in the region between 1990 and 2015) and high reliance on food imports, all factors that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable⁶. In addition, rising temperatures are projected to create urban heat islands⁷.

The analysis below provides a regional perspective that builds upon, and updates the information, from UNDP’s NDC Global Outlook Report 2021: *The State of Global Ambition*, published in October 2021.

NDC SUBMISSION STATUS

FIGURE 1

NDC submission status in Arab States region, as of 15 June 2022



UNDP works in 16 countries and one territory in the region promoting sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, and youth and women’s empowerment, alongside climate change efforts. Of these, seven were supported under UNDP’s Climate Promise to prepare second-generation NDCs: **Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan** and **Tunisia**. All had submitted revised NDCs as of 15 June 2022, although Sudan’s submission was an interim version (a fully updated version is expected later this year).

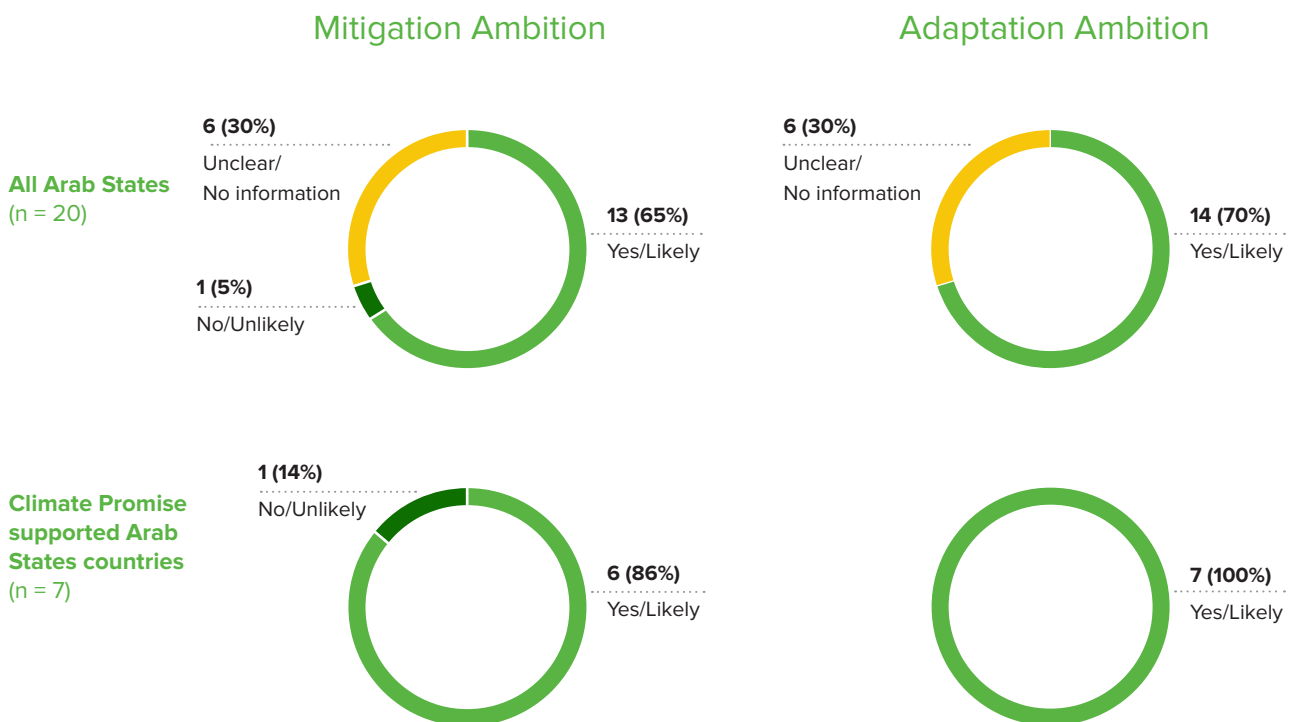
In comparison to the rest of the region, the seven countries supported under the Climate Promise are raising ambition at a more consistent rate (Figure 2). Of the seven, all raised adaptation ambitions, and

NDC AMBITION INTENTIONS

most revised NDCs represent a progression over the initial NDCs of 2015 with a clear increase in NDC mitigation ambitions.

FIGURE 2

NDC mitigation and adaptation enhancement intentions in Arab States region





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All Arab States countries supported under the Climate Promise who have fully submitted enhanced NDCs have raised **mitigation ambition** through stronger emission-reduction targets and by adding new mitigation sectors or increasing scope within sectors featured in the initial NDCs (Figure 3). In addition, 83 percent are increasing the scope of unconditional targets – thereby indicating their intentions to put domestic funding towards combatting climate change – while 67 percent are covering all, or added new GHGs.

The most common **adaptation enhancements** selected by all Climate Promise countries were to strengthen alignment of the NDC with National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) or other adaptation planning processes and instruments and to increase sectoral coverage or scope. In addition, 83 percent have included clearer adaptation objectives, while half are improving targets for monitoring and evaluation.

FIGURE 3

Selected mitigation and adaptation pathways of Climate Promise supported countries in Arab States

Mitigation Pathways

| | |
|----------|--|
| 6 (100%) | Increase GHG emission reduction targets |
| 6 (100%) | Add new mitigation sectors or increase scope within existing sectors |
| 5 (83%) | Increase scope of unconditional mitigation targets |
| 4 (67%) | Cover all GHGs or include new GHGs including SLCPs |

Adaptation Pathways

| | |
|----------|---|
| 6 (100%) | Align with NAP or other adaptation planning processes or instruments |
| 6 (100%) | Increase adaptation sectoral coverage or scope within existing sectors |
| 5 (83%) | Include clear adaptation objectives in line with the Paris Agreement including in a form of Adaptation Communications |
| 3 (50%) | Include quantitative or qualitative targets and provisions for a monitoring and evaluation system |



Iraq

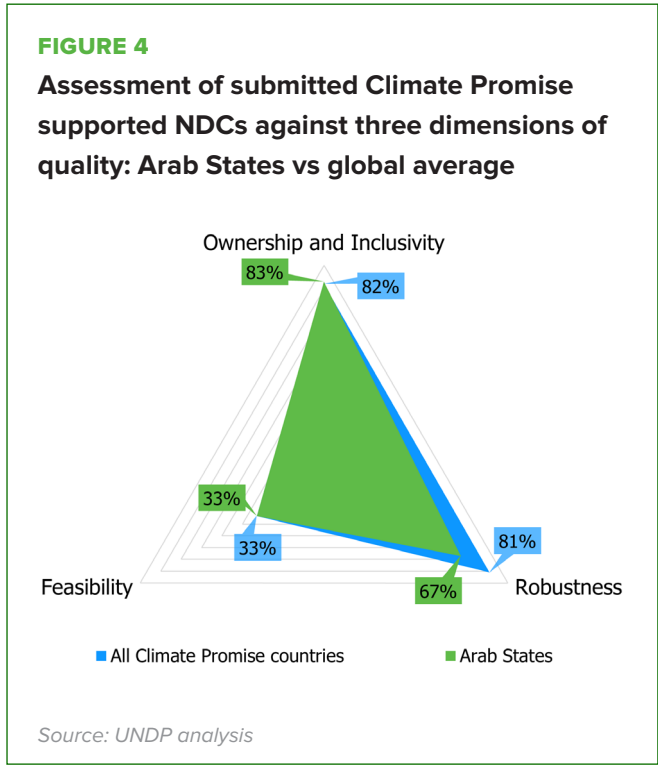
TRANSITIONING FROM OIL TO LOW-CARBON

UNDP has supported capacity building of the National Climate Change Center under the Ministry of Environment to support the country's NDC enhancement. With Climate Promise support, Iraq secured high-level political buy-in to raise NDC ambition and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon future from its current oil exporting economy. In the updated NDC, Iraq increased its conditional mitigation target by two percent from 13 percent to 15 percent by 2030 compared to business-as-usual (BAU) and increased its non-conditional mitigation target from one percent to two percent. The revised NDC proposes installing 12-Gigawatts of renewables at power utility scale, including through private sector investments, which would provide a solid foundation to liberalize and transform the power sector. To further support the low-carbon transition, Iraq is undertaking new large-scale programming on low-carbon cities with UNDP support. To achieve the NDC mitigation targets, Iraq's NDC highlights the need for USD 100 billion of investment.

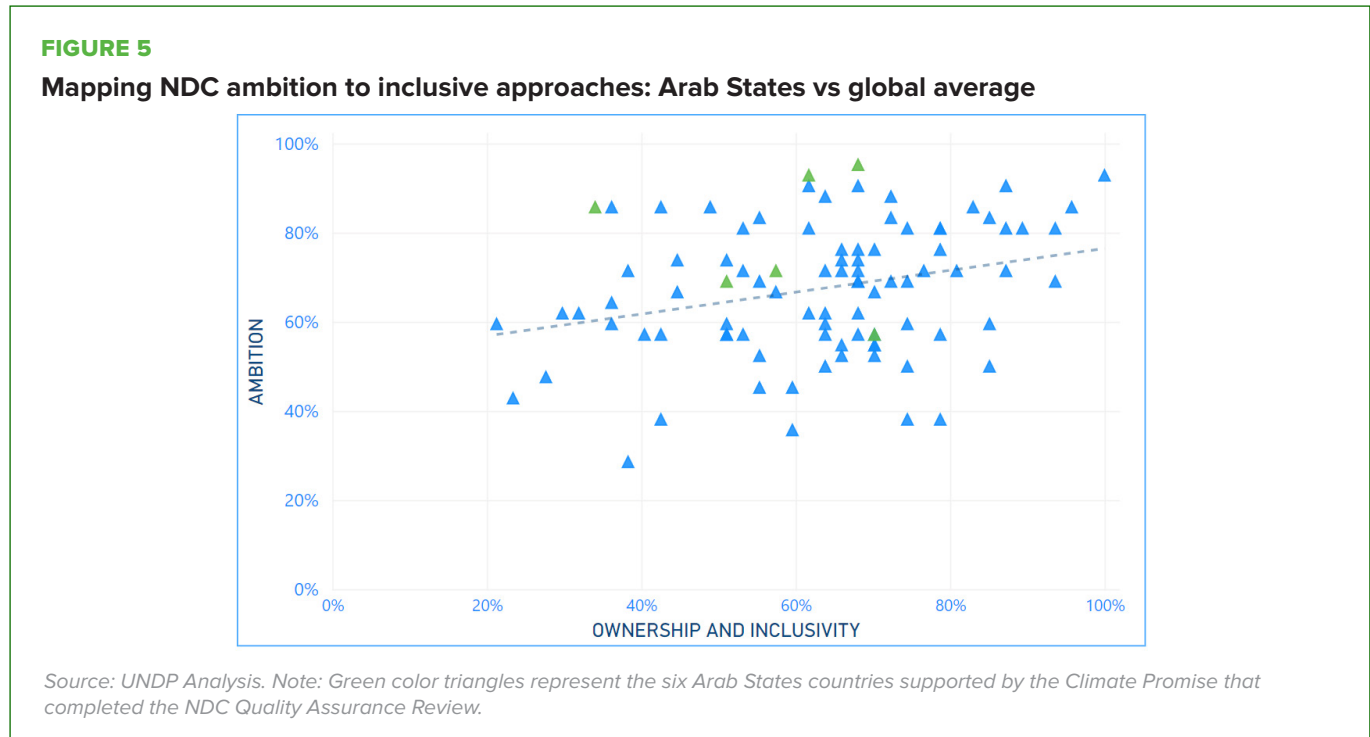
The quality of an NDC is arguably as important as its ambition. Higher-quality NDCs are more likely to lead to successful implementation and signal the government’s intention to be accountable for turning pledges into actions. Under the Climate Promise, UNDP developed a [Quality Assurance Checklist](#) that allows governments and/or other practitioners to systematically review opportunities to improve NDC quality against three dimensions: *i) Robustness*, *ii) Feasibility*, and *iii) Ownership and Inclusivity*. Using this checklist, UNDP undertook an in-depth analysis of second-generation NDCs submitted by Climate Promise supported countries, scoring NDCs based on a percentage of criteria that were met⁸.

As seen in Figure 4, the Arab States region scored slightly higher on the quality dimension of ownership and inclusivity (83 percent), compared to the global average of 82 percent. However, robustness of the NDCs was much lower (67 percent), compared to the global average (81 percent), and the average for NDC feasibility was low, at 33 percent -- albeit on par with the global average, which also stands at 33 percent.

The higher levels of ownership and inclusivity did not equate to higher ambition, even though there is a positive correlation between the level of NDC ambition in the region and the extent of inclusivity efforts during



the revision process (Figure 5). Based on our data, the general trend is that countries with greater inclusivity adopt a whole-of-society approach in their NDC revision process and this tends to lead to stronger and more ambitious NDCs. However, this is not always the case, especially in countries where high-level political will is lacking or where national economic circumstances or political crisis can create bottlenecks.



NDC IMPLEMENTATION READINESS

In 2019, UNDP defined and began monitoring seven “building blocks” for effective NDC implementation that are based on UNDP’s experience and lessons

learned from supporting countries throughout the NDC cycle⁹. Figure 6 compares progress in the region against the global average (triangles).

FIGURE 6

Progress on key systems and architecture: Arab States vs global average



Source: UNDP analysis, 2021. n = 6 for Arab States responses. Global averages are shown in the triangles.

Regional progress on putting in place the foundational “building blocks” of NDC implementation lags the global aggregated results reported by 122 countries in most cases, although the analysis is based upon a small sample size.

- In terms of **inter-ministerial coordination and stakeholder engagement mechanisms for NDC implementation**, 91 percent of countries have both vs 67 percent globally, but only 72 percent of countries in the Arab States have an **NDC implementation strategy** in place, or are developing one, vs 84 percent globally.
- On **mainstreaming**, the region is slightly ahead of global efforts at the *sectoral* level, where 45 percent of countries have completed this task (vs 39 percent globally), but lags on *national* level mainstreaming (30 percent regionally vs 37 percent global average) and *sub-nationally* (20 percent vs 24 percent).
- Although Arab States countries are more advanced on the completion of **NDC finance strategies** (27 percent vs 15 percent globally), the region trails the global average on **mobilizing finance**, with 45 percent accessing public finance (vs 61 percent globally) and nine percent accessing private finance (vs 21 percent globally). The region also lags on **implementation of mitigation and adaptation actions**.
- On **transparency**, all countries need to make advances as no country has a complete MRV system in place and 18 percent have not yet started this work (compared to eight percent globally).

Support needs identified by Climate Promise supported countries in the Arab States

The findings of the NDC implementation survey (Figure 6) are strongly aligned with future support needs identified by Climate Promise supported countries in the region¹⁰. Support to access **finance** is a high priority, requested by 71 percent of countries. More specifically, **Sudan** needs support to develop a resource mobilization strategy, **Morocco** is seeking investment options for the conditional part of their NDC, and **Tunisia** wants to establish institutional mechanisms to improve the mobilization



and effectiveness of climate finance. Strengthening **transparency** was also noted in several countries, including **Iraq**, which seeks support to quantify GHG emissions of mitigation projects and **Somalia**, which wants to establish a national MRV system and strengthen the institutional set-up with adequate infrastructure and human resources to track climate actions. Lastly, a few countries highlighted mainstreaming gaps, including **Lebanon**, which wishes to unbundle conditional/unconditional targets for better mainstreaming.

Somalia

AMBITION ANCHORED IN GREEN RECOVERY

Somalia has significantly stepped up its ambition from an action only first NDC to one with a target of achieving 30 percent emissions reductions against a BAU scenario by 2030 – conditional on international public and private support. To do so, Somalia has expanded the number of gases and sectors covered in its updated NDC, with quantifiable targets for five key sectors (agriculture, energy, forestry, transport, waste). Somalia's NDC also recognizes the importance of adaptation and has included detailed adaptation actions that align with green recovery priorities. A series of new climate adaptation initiatives initiated with UNDP support, including strengthening adaptation planning, will facilitate Somalia to move from NDC enhancement to implementation.

HIGHLIGHTS OF CLIMATE PROMISE SUPPORT TO DATE

Finance and investment

Two countries have been conducting assessments to inform public budgeting and finance frameworks and develop financing strategies, while another is raising awareness and advocating for climate investment, especially from the private sector, to finance NDC implementation. In **Morocco**, a training was organized in September 2021 for the financial sector on instruments to fund climate action, attracting participants from commercial banks, the Bank of Morocco, the Casablanca Stock Exchange, and the Communal Fund.

Policies, institutions and capacity building

To support sectoral target setting, six countries reported progress on assessments and analyses of baselines and scenarios, target reviews, and updates in priority NDC sectors. **Jordan** undertook analysis to determine implementation status of the 2015 NDC and better understand the barriers hindering progress. The exercise was undertaken by the Royal Scientific Society, an independent non-governmental multidisciplinary science institution established by Royal Charter, which

subsequently made recommendations for new NDC targets based on the analysis.

Societal ownership and inclusivity

All seven Arab States countries participating in the Climate Promise submitted NDCs that integrate gender dimensions and two developed guidance tools to support gender mainstreaming in climate action. **Tunisia's** enhanced NDC, submitted in October 2021, has proven to be a leader in the region for gender responsiveness, with gender included as one of three transversal areas of the revised NDC. For example, Tunisia has articulated its adaptation ambitions through a “Star of Resilience” that comprises the five domains of food, water, social, territorial, and economic. Importantly, within the social domain, ten priority areas were identified, all of which include numerous measures that directly address gender and target women. A training for Tunisian non-governmental organizations that work on coastal ecosystems has provided them with a methodological approach and practical tools for mainstreaming gender in the design of adaptation projects.





Lebanon

COMMITTED TO AMBITION DESPITE CRISIS CONTEXT

Despite the mixture of political, economic, and humanitarian turmoil, Lebanon submitted a more ambitious NDC that includes enhanced GHG and renewable energy targets. It has committed to increase its GHG emission reduction target relative to the BAU scenario from 15 percent to 20 percent (as an unconditional target), and from 30 percent to 31 percent (as a conditional target). Moreover, Lebanon committed to unconditionally generate 18 percent of its power (i.e., electricity demand) and 11 percent of its heat demand (in the building sector) from renewable energy sources by 2030, compared to a combined 15 percent by 2015. Through the Climate Promise, Lebanon completed a climate-proofing analysis of national development plans which helped to ensure that carbon emissions were not 'locked-in' and that the resilience of investments were safeguarded. The climate-proofing exercise was an important first step towards NDC implementation, showcasing the economic and societal benefits of climate action in financial terms.

As host to both COP27 and COP28, the Arab States region will see an expanded level of focus on accelerating NDC implementation. This includes scaling up finance to advance the energy transition and connect the region to emerging market mechanisms, while addressing the nexus of climate change and security with climate-resilient food and water systems.

Climate security: The region hosts 14 of the world's 20 most water-stressed countries¹¹, and projections show that water availability and agricultural productivity could decline by a further 30 percent by 2050 owing to climate change¹². More than 40 percent of the region's population is already exposed to drought and climate-induced disasters¹³. Climate change acts as a risk multiplier, potentially increasing the risk for conflict and displacement in the region as tensions mount over sharing access to increasingly scarce natural resources. Building climate resilience and strengthening adaptation efforts is a key priority for the region. Thus, integrated responses at policy level to tackling climate change, conflict prevention and sustaining peace, coupled with coordination among sectors and strong government capacity are needed to support strengthening national resilience to climate change. At sub-national level, it is critical to introduce adaptation measures to build food and water security on the ground to improve the climate resilience of local communities.

Green recovery: Many countries in the region face mounting economic, social and political instability alongside increasing climatic disasters. The priority is to integrate climate adaptation into the recovery of key economic sectors, as a means of building back better and ensuring results can withstand future climate shocks. Climate solutions should be mainstreamed into the recovery of agriculture, micro-small- and medium-size enterprises, tourism and infrastructure sectors, along with other sectors that are at the center of economic recovery needs while also being highly vulnerable to climate risks.

Low-carbon cities: More than 65 percent¹⁴ of the Arab population lives in cities and, by 2050, it is estimated that urban populations will double in size¹⁵. Strong urban planning is required to address the continued growth of cities while also taking into consideration the impacts of rising temperatures. The priority lies in capacity development for cities with the focus on energy-efficient buildings, transport, district heating and cooling, and deployment of technologies to promote productive uses of renewable energy for economic sectors and households.

Renewable energy: Arab countries are increasingly focusing on expansion of renewable energy generation – an important step for a region that hosts the world's highest levels of solar radiation. While the region has expanded solar and wind





capacities 10-fold from 2008 to 2018¹⁶, there is still much that can be done to scale up renewable energy, particularly through private sector partnerships. Through National Renewable Energy Action Plans and NDC processes, more ambitious targets and innovative policies are now seen as a basis for attracting private investment, reforming energy subsidies, establishing renewable energy institutions and national funds, and experimenting with renewable energy development zones. The cumulative regional target of renewable energy capacity by 2035 now stands at 190 GW – a 26-fold increase over 2018 levels¹⁷. Achieving this vision will require a strong enabling environment at the country level, including enhanced policies that reduce and/or transfer investor risks. A capacity gap exists for advancing innovations to achieve goals of a green recovery and scale up renewable energy and energy efficiency results in the region. The priority would be to address the energy needs of the large and growing number of poor and displaced communities in the

region, through expansion of decentralized sustainable energy solutions that also contribute to reducing poverty and creating green job opportunities.

Climate finance: As a climate risk hotspot, climate-resilient and low-carbon development planning and climate financing is a top priority in the Arab States region. The total amount required for NDCs implementation is around USD 600 billion by 2030¹⁸. A key priority moving forward in the region will be to scale up innovative climate finance for both mitigation and adaptation, and to ensure that such finance directly flows to, is implemented by, and benefits poor and vulnerable communities as active agents of change. Mobilisation of climate investment for green projects with development benefits will require putting in place de-risking approaches that provide incentives to private investors, along with operationalizing innovative financial instruments and new forms of partnerships.



ENDNOTES

- 1 Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- 2 Based on 2018 Climate Watch (CAIT) data, including Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry sector.
- 3 UNDP, 2019. [Arab Human Development Report Research Paper: Leaving No-One Behind. Towards Inclusive Citizenship in Arab Countries.](#)
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 IPCC, 2022. Sixth Assessment Report Working Group 2. [Fact sheet — Asia.](#)
- 6 UNDP, 2019. [Arab Human Development Report Research Paper: Leaving No-One Behind. Towards Inclusive Citizenship in Arab Countries.](#)
- 7 IPCC, 2022. Sixth Assessment Report Working Group 2. [Fact sheet — Asia.](#)
- 8 Global results were first published in UNDP's [State of Climate Ambition Report \(2021\)](#) with data from 67 countries. This information has been updated to include data from 96 of the 99 submitted NDCs (as of 15 June 2022) from Climate Promise supported countries. Three countries submitted interim NDCs were not included in this update. For more detailed information on the methodology used, please refer to the 2021 report.
- 9 A UNDP survey on NDC implementation readiness obtained 133 developing country responses in 2019 and 122 developing country responses in 2021. The 2021 data includes responses from six of the seven Arab States countries supported under the Climate Promise.
- 10 Data comes from Climate Promise supported countries that responded to a question in their 2021 Q4 reports that asked what future support they needed.
- 11 UNDP, 2013. [Water Governance in the Arab Region: Managing Scarcity and Securing the Future.](#)
- 12 UNDP, 2018. [Climate Change Adaptation in the Arab States: Best practices and lessons learned.](#)
- 13 The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, Koday, K., 2017. [Social protection after the Arab Spring. Volume 14, Issue No. 3 December.](#)
- 14 World Bank, 2021. [Urban population- Middle East & North Africa.](#)
- 15 World Bank, 2020. [Urban Development.](#)
- 16 UNDP and Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, 2019. [Arab Future Energy Index \(AFEX\) 2019.](#)
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 According to the analysis of all NDCs submitted by countries in the region (approximate figure).



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