



Media Report:

On the Sidelines of the Celebration of the World Environment Day -2011

May | 2011

Manifestation and Development

(General background):

The world celebrates each year on the fifth of June the "World Environment Day"; the celebration of this important event dates back to the year 1972 which marked the Declaration of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on the sidelines of the Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, that led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) - in December of the same year. The Declaration set had (UNEP) as the principal organ of the international organization concerned with global environmental affairs. Since that time, the environmental system acquired global, international and regional momentum; and has had an increasing influential role in dealing seriously with the various environmental issues.

The year 1972 marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics; and in the march of global environmental action. Since the Declaration of the 5th of June as the World Environment Day, the different fields of environmental work has become a regular global platform able to develop respect environmental agenda of global concerns, and create an ideal annual forum to mobilize international consensus and views on environmental concerns and developments. The Stockholm Conference 1972, witnessed the launching of the first global plan of action on the environment that helped develop a framework for environmental policies which later contributed to the evolution of environmental laws and regulations during the period of the seventies and eighties.

Many environmental events and gatherings rolled after with, even some bright spots, which spurred an effective shift in the process of global environmental action; recalling, for example, the Nairobi Declaration (May 1982), which reviewed the achievements and progress of the United Nations in implementing the Stockholm Action Plan, In addition to the major challenges faced by the international community in the light of experience gained during the seventies.

In the same context, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (June 1992) formed an important turning point in national and international policies in the integration of environmental dimensions into economic and developmental objectives, which in turn contributed to the Declaration of the General Assembly of the United Nations for the establishment of the International Commission on Sustainable Development in December of the same year.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg (August - 2002), was meant to help advance management of global environmental affairs, where the conference sought to highlight the need to improve the rates of use of natural resources, and to review the consumption and production patterns adopted by the States. The Conference also adopted a document on the Agenda for the 21st Century set by the Earth Summit, in addition to the international development goals contained in the Millennium Summit Declaration issued by the United Nations in 2000.

Place and Theme of the 2011 World Environment Day Celebration:

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) consistently selects a particular topic to be the focus theme of the celebration of World Environment Day. This time the choice stems from the nature of the risks and challenges associated with the global environment, as UNEP decided on "Forests: Nature at Your Service" to be the focus theme of the celebration this year.

India will be for the first time ever the global host of World Environment Day 2011 (WED) on 5 June. This year's theme 'Forests: Nature at Your Service' underscores the intrinsic link between quality of life and the health of forests and forest ecosystems. The WED theme also supports this year's UN International Year of Forests.

The choice of India came in support of its endeavor to monitor the enduring threats faced by forests in India, to embrace the process of a

transition to a green economy and shore up awareness-raising efforts adopted by the Indian government to reduce those risks and threats.

The (UNEP) through a series of celebrations of World Environment Day, has been able to work on streamlining environmental issues to become accessible to the understanding of individuals, in addition to widening the narrow confines of responsibility towards the environment; to include efforts and contributions of each individual as a partner in the global efforts towards attainment of sustainable development.

Key Facts on Forest Issues

- Forests cover about 31% of the total land area.
- Forests provide livelihoods and living conditions for approximately 1,600 million people around the world.
- About 300 million people around the world live in forests.
- The total volume of global foreign trade in forest products amounted to more than \$ 400 billion (2006).
- Forests covered about 6.3% of the total area of the Arab World (2005) compared to 9.5% (1980).

Environmental Revival in the Arab Region

The Arab growing interest in environmental issues has coincided with a significant transition regarding global environmental concerns in 1972; as the Stockholm Conference has had evident impact are on national policies in a number of Arab countries. Many Arab countries rushed to join more than 75 international and regional environmental accords, in addition to the adoption of ambitious strategies for the protection of the environment. The most prominent step in the process of joint Arab action was the establishment of the "Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE)" in September 1987, in order to enhance

Arab cooperation in environmental concerns, identifies main environmental problems in the Arab world and priorities for action. The joint Arab efforts in the field of environment, culminated in the announcement of the Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. In contrast, the "Environment Outlook for the Arab Region (EOAR): Environment for Development and Human Well-being" report, published by the UNEP in 2010, showed the limited role of the environment-concerned national entities and institutions, in the promotion of sustainable development approaches in the Arab Region in general. The report attributed this to the newness of some institutions, the weakness of the institutional systems in others, lack of expertise and technical personnel and the complexity of functions and roles in other institutions. "The relative marginalization of the environmental institutions within the Arab decision-making process, form the main obstacle to the anticipated effectiveness of the role of these institutions, in the surge towards attainment of sustainable development," the report said.

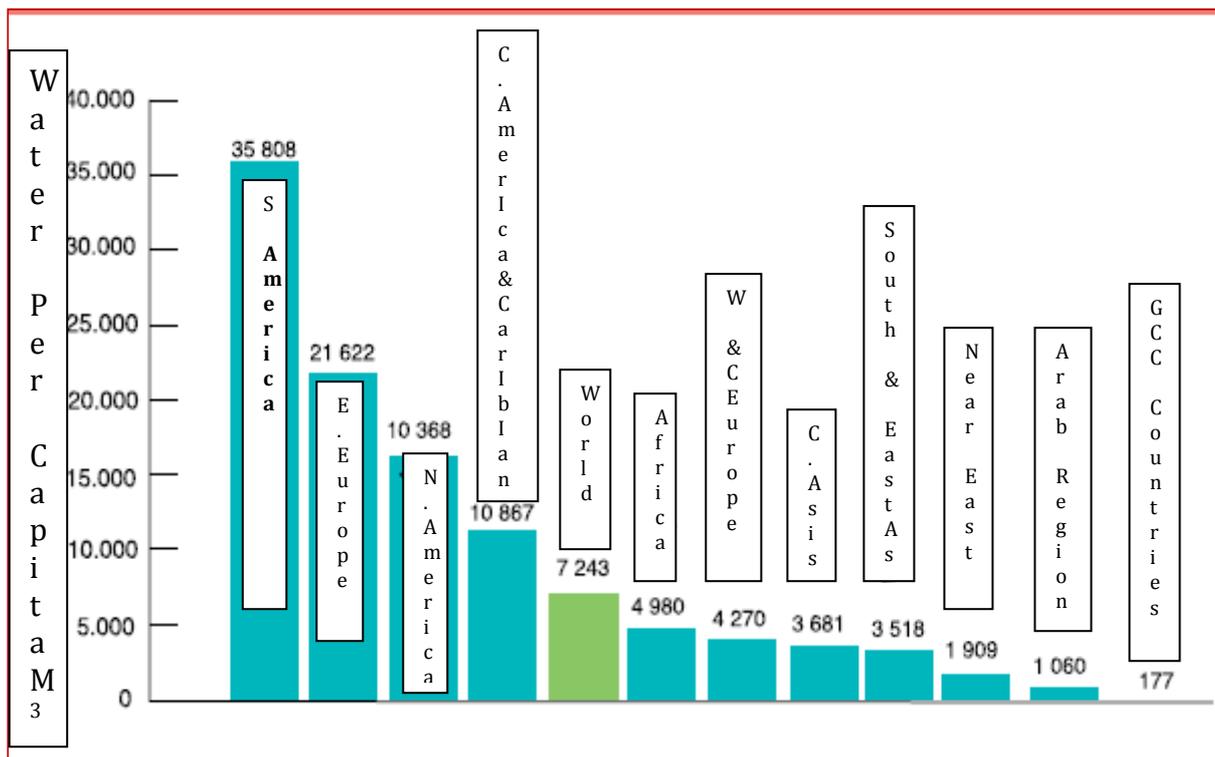
The Issue of Water in the Arab Region

Water is classified as the most important natural resource in the world, and as one of the most crucial determinants of economic and social development. The issue of water in the Arab Region is of particular importance, specially that the larger percentage of the Arab lands lie within the dry desert areas, in addition to the dwindling share of Arab countries from the rainwater, high evaporation rates and the increasing invasion of fresh surface or ground water by salt water, which is also known as sea water intrusion, due to sea-level rise. All this has made the region as part of the world's most water-scarce areas. Things are getting complicated in the light of the continued increase in demand for and consumption of water, in addition to the inefficiency of water

management in the Arab Region in general, saluting that most government aquatic policies focus on the supply side by increasing the amounts of produced water, with no real incentives for consumers to rationalize the use of water; as revealed by the (UNEP) report on the Arab Environment.

While Arab countries account for about 10% of the total area of the world, their share of the global annual average rainfall does not exceed 2.1%; thus; more than 85% of the territory of the Arab Region is classified as dry or very dry areas. For more clarification, in the light of the current population growth rates in the Arab Region, the UNEP Environment Outlook for the Arab Region: "Environment for Development and Human Well-being" report had referred to the accelerated decline in the per capita share of water from around 3500 M³/year in 1960 to about 1230 M³/year in 1995, before declining to the current rate of about 1000 M³/year, which is known up to a global water poverty. The global average per capita share of water is about 7240 M³/year. It should be noted that according to the current rates of population growth in the Arab Region, the report expected a decrease in per capita water, in the Arab Region to about 500 M³/year by 2025. The Region would become as a whole within the countries that suffer from extreme water poverty.

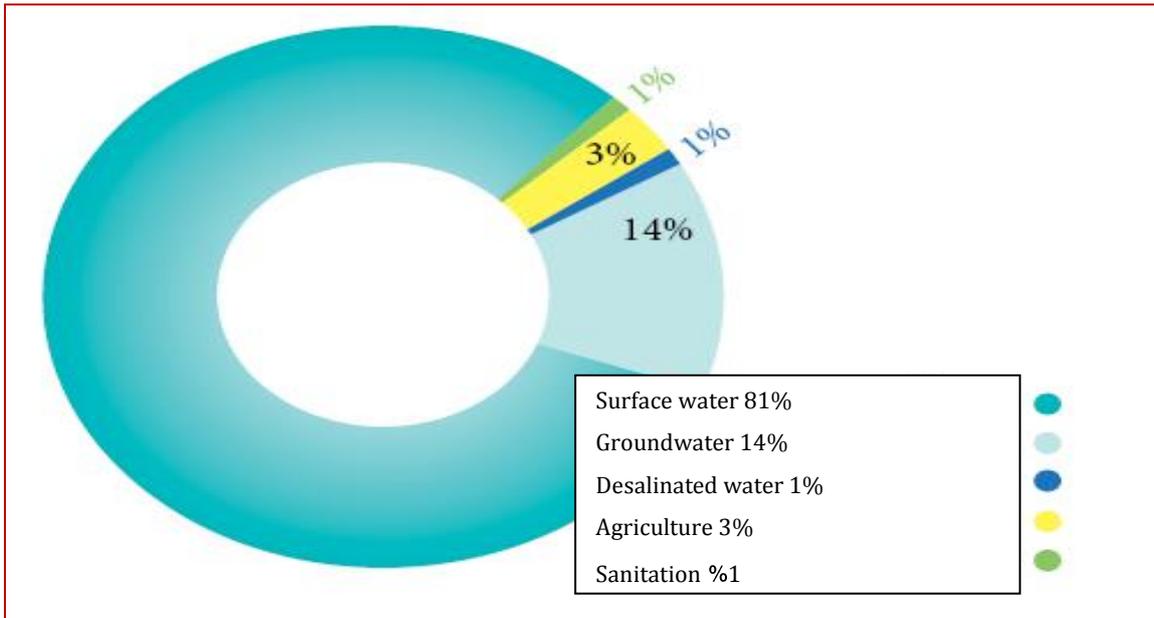
The Per capita share of fresh water in the Arab Region compared to the other regions of the world



Source: Environment Outlook Report for the Arab Region, UNEP 2010

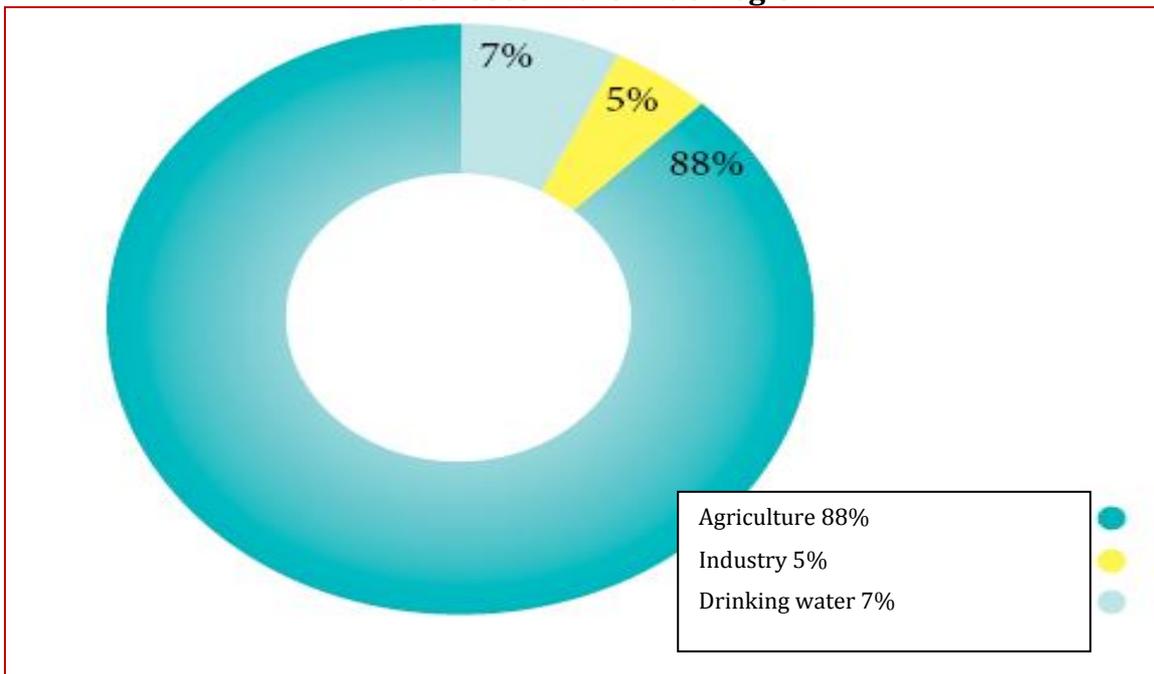
Available estimates suggest that surface water of (main and internal rivers water) constitutes about 81% of total water resources in the Arab Region. However; 66% of the total surface water flows from outside the Arab Region. The total use of domestic water in the Arab Region accounts for about 7% of the total water used in the region, while the average per capita consumption of Arab household water in the region is equal to 200 liters / day. This rate varies greatly from one country to another in the Arab Region; especially in the GCC countries. The (UNEP) on the Arab environment revealed that the rates of household water use in the UAE, are among the highest in the world, as the UAE occupies second place worldwide following the United States of America.

Water Resources in the Arab Region



Source: Environment Outlook Report for the Arab Region, UNEP 2010

Water Uses in the Arab Region



Source: Environment Outlook Report for the Arab Region, UNEP 2010

The overwhelming response shown by the government of Abu Dhabi towards environmental issues in general and the issue of water in

particular, is note worthy. In the middle of last year (May-2010), the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (AED), launched the largest campaign in the Arab Region for rationalization of water consumption, under the auspices of the Government of Abu Dhabi, in cooperation with a number of stakeholders and concerned entities. In its campaign, AED installed water saving devices in taps, in a number of government buildings, commercial establishments, schools, residential areas and mosques in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

According to estimates by the Environment Agency -Abu Dhabi, toilets and kitchens water taps, account for almost 60% of the total use of household water in Abu Dhabi. The EAD campaign aimed at the conservation of about 30% of the water for daily household use, taking into account not to affect consumers. The early stages of the campaign witnessed the installation of more than 500 thousand water conservation sets in the emirate; and the preliminary results of the campaign showed generation of economic and environmental benefits and reduction in water consumption, all contributing to the achievement of environmental sustainability in the emirate.

The Conflict between Environment and Economy

Many celebrations of the World Environment Day were held during the past few years under unusual circumstances, as the conflict between the environment and the economy has witnessed a high degree of complexity. In the midst of the untiring efforts exerted by various countries and economies, including the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in order to optimize exploitation of economic resources, many problems emerged, in relation to the priorities that should be focused on. The question is centered on economic growth versus preservation of the environment, and perhaps the current debate in international organizations about the primacy of the environment on the economy or vice versa, focuses on the serious threats posing in the ecosystem a result of the various imbalances in the economic cycles of many goods and services. These May

occur during the provision of the requirements of primary production, raw materials, natural resources, stages of production, processing, or consumption; including as well methods and techniques of waste processing and treatment.

The World Bank estimates of the direct economic costs of environmental degradation, ranged between 2.1% to 4.8% of total GDP for a number of Arab countries in 2002. In Egypt, for instance, the economic costs of environmental degradation reached more than U.S. \$ 14 billion, which is more than double the estimated costs in some high-income countries. In contrast, the theoretical analysis, of the Environment Outlook for the Arab Region, indicates that Egypt alone may meet the global demand for energy if the potential of solar energy is fully employed. Estimates and analysis thus highlight the urgent need to reconsider the nature of the relationship between environment and economy, in such a way that the relationship would become one of consensus and harmony, rather than the current situation of conflict.

Recycling of waste in Abu Dhabi

- In the midst of the efforts adopted by the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to boost economic diversification and reduce the dependence on the oil sector, the Government of the Emirate strives to broaden the base of the local economy and to search for alternative - non-traditional - sources for economic growth. This is furthered by the launching of the potential capabilities of the various determinants of the economic environment; strengthen the private sector's role in the development process, as well as exploring best practices and successful experiences of countries and economies, which are consistent with the uniqueness of the emirate. This should run apace in conjunction with the process of development and economic diversification. The pattern of the current development of the Emirate reveals some opportunities and challenges, which if properly harnessed and handled would have great effects in enhancing current development efforts and boosting Abu Dhabi's status in the next stage.
- The observant interpretation of economic and social life aspects in Abu Dhabi reveals that there are untapped potential in various fields, and perhaps this affects the economic cycle of most goods and products, resulting in making these energies idle and unforeseen, for a large segment of those involved in economic affairs in the emirate. Moreover, the exploitation of these idle capacities necessitates the availability of several key requirements, in addition to government support, advanced technology, active and efficient role of the private sector and high awareness in population. Most of these requirements

can be described - at present - as modest in the case of Abu Dhabi .

- The data issued by the Environment Authority - Abu Dhabi in 2009, revealed that the average daily waste per capita in the city of Abu Dhabi out of the total waste collection amounted to almost 2.3 kilograms per person per day. This rate is substantially higher than the average per capita in the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where the average per capita waste amounts to about 1.5 kg per capita per day; which is also higher than the estimated average of 1.4 kg per capita per day in the city of Riyadh.
- The EAD released information embodies many opportunities and challenges that need attention and highlighting. On the one hand, the relatively high per capita waste in the city of Abu Dhabi indicates that there is an opportunity for industry of waste recycling in the emirate, and the consequent positive economic and social benefits, including reducing depletion of natural resources, augmenting industrial activity, provision of alternative sources of energy and reducing production costs. On the other hand, the data highlights the fundamental challenge of adopting a pattern of efficient management to administer this vast amount of waste in the emirate, which is a potential cornerstone in the development of a sound industry for waste recycling in the emirate.
- The Government of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi has recently announced an ambitious strategy for waste management in the Emirate, with the establishment of Abu Dhabi Centre for Waste Management in December -2008 under the umbrella of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, to serve as the competent authority for monitoring and coordinating waste management activities across the Emirate and to supervise the implementation of the ambitious strategy of the Government in this regard. This reflects the keenness of the government and its commitment to maintain leadership in the field of waste management. The Center works to achieve this goal through the development of waste management practices in the Emirate in cooperation with the private sector.

The Green Economy

The correlation between the environment and the economy in recent times, have seen many attempts to achieve compatibility and harmony between economic goals and environmental considerations, which is recently been known in economic literature as (production triggers) ,(Green Growth) or (Green Economy). The notion stands now as one of the options (strategies) at the level of effective resolution of the conflict between the environment and the economy, in such a way as to fulfill the aspirations of both sides (Win-Win Approach). The economic goals concerned with access the pattern of the optimal use of available

resources - economic efficiency -; and environmental goals are concerned with the sustainability of available natural resources, as that allows the economic performance and efficient uses to the fullest. Taking into account environmental considerations is therefore, the right step to achieve economic objectives and sustainable development.

The UN Secretary-General's reference in the United Nations Environment -2010 annual report, - to the ability of the Green Economy to deal seriously with the various current environmental challenges, Carries an explicit confirmation of the certainty of the international community that the Green Economy, would effectively bring about the desired balance between the environment and the economy. This comes at a time when the Green Economy was selected as one of the main issues under discussion within the activities of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio +20" (Earth Summit 2012).

In the same context, the declaration of the Global Forum of Environment Ministers in Bali (Indonesia) 2010, on the recognition of the Green Economy as one of the available strategic options for achievement of sustainable development, as well as its ability to generate various economic and social benefits and surpluses; this calls everyone to seriously address and well prepare for this new global trend. The final Declaration of the leaders of the Group of Twenty (G-20) during the summit held in South Korea late last year, had confirmed the consent of the leaders of those countries, to support the initiatives of the Green Economy in the world, stressing at the same time their commitment to develop and implement a general framework for the growth of a strong, sustainable and more balanced economy.

Finally, in light of the announcement by the leadership of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to make sustainable development a slogan for

the next phase, the integration of environmental considerations in policy development is no longer an option; but has become a necessity dictated by the requirements of sustainable development. The separation (exclusion) of environmental considerations for future economic growth trends constitutes a major challenge to promoting the achievements of the process of economic development in the Emirate, which calls for concerted government efforts for more integration of the environmental dimension within the economic framework.
