**Policies and Strategies to achieve a secure and sustainable environment in Egypt**

**Submitted to:** Special Rapporteur on the environment

**Submitted by:** Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (In a Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations).

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**Preface**

The Egyptian Government has launched its Sustainable Development Strategy, known as Egypt Vision 2030, in February 2016. This vision sets out the Government's actions over the next 15 years to achieve and implement sustainable development goals that aim to change and make a real difference in human life. It serves as a long-term development strategy Covering the three dimensions of development: economic, social and environmental. Through achieving equitable and inclusive development by strengthening capacities and opportunities for the most vulnerable and marginalized without leaving anyone behind. In addition to the promotion of small and medium-enterprises, job creation, social protection, integration and entrepreneurship, as well as poverty monitoring and reporting.

So, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (Egypt) submits this report to clarify and follow the strategies and policies taken by the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt to achieve a sustainable and secure environment according to its vision to implement the sustainable development goals 2030.

**Commitment to environmental protection under the Egyptian Constitution**

The Egyptian Constitution affirms that the three main dimensions of sustainable development (socio - economic - environmental) are not separate from each other. Without these dimensions, it is impossible to achieve the real change that necessary to secure the decent life of the Egyptian citizen and protect his environment in the short and long term. Some articles of the Constitution also address both dimensions of development indirectly.

**According to the articles of the Constitution (44, 45 and 46), the environmental dimension of sustainable development was mentioned in line with the various articles of the Constitution according to which the State is committed to:**

* Protecting the Nile River and preserving Egypt's historical rights in it, not wasting water or polluting it, as well as preserving groundwater, and taking the necessary measures to achieve water security and the right of every citizen to enjoy it.
* Protecting the sea, lakes, beaches and waterways of the State and its natural reserves, and prohibiting the encroachment, pollution or use of them in contravention of their nature. The State shall also protect and develop the urban green area.
* Protecting plant, animal and fish wealth and protecting them from extinction or danger.
* Everyone has the right to a secure and healthy environment and its protection is a national duty. The State is obliged to take the necessary measures to preserve it and not to harm it.
* Rational use of natural resources to ensure sustainable development and guarantee the rights of future generations.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**The Environmental Dimension in Egypt Vision2030**

The strategic vision of the environment 2030 aims to ensure that the environment is the main focus of all development and economic sectors in a manner that achieves the security of natural resources; supports the equitable use; optimal utilization and investment of natural resources; guarantees the rights of future generations; diversifies sources of production and economic activities. Also supporting competitiveness and creating new jobs, eradicating poverty and achieving social justice while providing a clean, healthy and safe environment for the Egyptians.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Through the environmental dimension of Egypt's strategy to achieve the sustainable development goals, Egypt seeks to preserve the environment and prevent its deterioration, preserve natural resources, and preserve the rights of future generations. Egypt also aims at improving the quality of life of the present generations, improving awareness of nature protection and reducing the impact of climate change in order to provide a clean and safe environment for future generations. This is through the implementation of development policies that integrate the environmental dimension and balance the priorities of economic growth and the environmental dimension. The policies which are able to stop environmental degradation and maintain its balance, move to more sustainable consumption and production patterns, protect biodiversity and use it in a sustainable manner and with effective community participation. It also aims to fulfill its international obligations in the field of environment and waste management, based on the concepts of governance and circular economy. In addition to having a global informative, technical and environmental content.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Moreover, The Strategic Vision for the Environment 2030 aims to identify mechanisms to encourage investment in natural resources and ecosystems to support the economy and create new jobs. This vision therefore sets out the means of achieving a comprehensive economic renaissance without prejudice to the rights of future generations to natural resources and to a clean environment. The strategic vision also gives utmost importance to the emphasis on Egypt's role and position on environmental issues at the international level.[[4]](#footnote-4)

This vision is in line with the United Nations sustainable development goals beyond 2015, which considers the environment as one of the dimensions of sustainable development. As well as identifying a range of issues addressed through **Goal 13** on urgent action to address climate change and its impacts, **Goal 14** on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine, seas, oceans and Marine Resources and **Goal 15** on the protection and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, combating desertification, halting land degradation and protecting biodiversity.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Hence, the Egyptian policies to achieve a sustainable and secure environment are based on achieving a number of objectives:**

1. **The first objective** is to achieve rational and sustainable management of natural resources assets, including air, water, energy and land including natural resources and mineral resources, with a focus on water resources and water security. This issue has an impact on national security, especially with Egypt entering the stage of water poverty.
2. **The second objective** is to eliminate the environment pollution. This objective focuses on two main issues: first one is to eliminate air pollution by reducing the loads of air pollution, while the second one is related to environmental pollution resulting from waste, with a focus on solid and hazardous wastes. Seeking to changing the way of dealing with solid waste from being a burden on the state to an economically sustainable system that maximizes the exploitation of natural resources. As for hazardous waste, it has serious damage to the health of citizens and environmental safety. It is necessary to monitor and develop the hazardous waste management system to reduce its health and environmental effects.
3. **The third objective** is to address biodiversity and ecosystems in both natural environments whether terrestrial or water and coastal areas. The focus is on the development of nature reserves, which are the most important and effective tool for the conservation of biodiversity.
4. **The fourth objective** relates to Egypt's obligations to international and regional environmental conventions. Priority agreements have been classified based on the importance of meeting Egypt's international obligations, national priority and the number of projects and activities associated with each convention, particularly the international conventions on climate change, biodiversity, desertification and conventions on conservation of natural resources.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Governmental interest in achieving a secure and sustainable environment**

Egypt played an important role in all negotiating processes for the environment and sustainable development, this is based on Egypt's active membership in a number of geographical and regional groups. As well as Egypt's leadership of the African Group's efforts under the Egyptian presidency of AMCEN, and The President of the Republic took charge of the functions of Coordinator of the African Heads of States and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC). Egypt sought to emphasize the interests of developing countries and their right to achieve development, eradicate poverty. In addition to the need for developed countries to provide the necessary means of implementation and support in all its forms (financial support, capacity building programs and technology transfer) to developing countries. So that the developing countries can implement their obligations under these agreements with emphasis on the principles established in this framework, especially the principles of equity and shared responsibilities and different burdens.

At the last Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, Egypt launched the African Renewable Energy Initiative. As well as the launch of the African Adaptation Initiative to deal with the effects of climate change. Both initiatives were welcomed by the countries of the continent as well as by international partners. In addition, the Egyptian government is seeking to strengthen cooperation between Egypt and international partners in the fields of environmental dimension, thus contributing to the achievement of development and the eradication of poverty.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Measures and policies adopted by Egypt to achieve a secure and sustainable environment**

1. **Green Economy**

A green economy is one of the mechanisms for achieving sustainable development. It can involve diverse opportunities such as promoting innovation, establishing new markets, creating jobs and contributing to poverty reduction. The green economy is an opportunity to leapfrog developmental stages and apply advanced technologies for achieving food security and rural access to energy, clean water supply, housing, sanitation and public transport, which can create jobs and contribute to poverty eradication as well.

Egypt's strategy to turn into a green economy include many green economy principles and objectives. The overall strategy aims at broadening the range of targets for specific sectors, such as the energy sector. The latest report issued by the Egyptian National Competitiveness Council focuses on strategies, investments and public policies that can drive the path of green economic transformation. The Egyptian government has adopted a long-term energy efficiency plan and has set a target of 20% of the electricity needs of renewable energy sources by 2020, with a profitability capacity of 12%. In 2010, Egypt received $ 1.3 billion to invest in clean energy development through solar and thermal projects.

**To achieve the opportunities of the green economy and sustainable development, the Egyptian government is implementing several projects, including:**

* Implementing a national program to promote the development of industrial zones to become environmentally friendly green industrial zones.
* To impose environmental compensation on every industrial, commercial or service establishment that violates environmental rules and laws and causes damage to the environment.
* Coordinate with the concerned authorities to work on the optimal use of resources and rationalize their consumption.
* Program of solar lighting project for some ministries' facilities within the program of sustainable development.[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. **Protected areas and conservation of natural resources**

The Egyptian government has given special attention to nature reserves, conservation of natural resources and environmental protection. In partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Egyptian government, represented by the Ministry of Environment, has established nature reserves throughout the country, including Siwa and Wadi Al Rayyan. In order to improve nature reserves to become first class eco-tourism sites and introducing a ticketing system to ensure sustainability of projects. About 12 nature reserves sites have been established in partnership with the government nationwide, covering 111,000 square kilometers and creating more than 350 jobs in these areas. This approach links conservation and sustainable use of natural resources to improving the livelihoods of surrounding communities, in partnership with national authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. **Egypt's plan to deal with climate change**

Egypt is one of the most countries at risk from the impacts of climate change, despite being one of the world's least contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions. The risks of this phenomenon are mainly threatening Egypt's water resources. These risks are divided into two parts: The first concerns coastal areas, which are exposed to rising water levels and causing economic and social damage to coastal areas. And the second is related to the flow of water to the Nile River, whether up or down which required rapid intervention to adapt to both cases.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Therefore, the Egyptian government attaches great importance to reducing the potential risks. The government is working on several projects aimed at replacing old transportation with modern natural gas, rationalizing energy. In addition to reviewing environmental laws to develop measures and actions to reduce the risks of climate change. It also works on a number of projects that protect the coast of the Delta from the impacts of climate change.

**Besides Egypt's international obligations as a party to several international conventions related to the elimination of climate change, the Egyptian government adopted a plan to address climate change, which includes a number of axes:**

* Exchange of information to reach the real dimensions of the phenomenon of climate change and its environmental impact.
* Cooperation with the international community in preserving the quality of the environment and limiting the causes of climate change.
* Raising public awareness of the phenomenon and its economic dimensions and dealing with it.
* Capacity-building and the activation of international and technical assistance programs and transfer of technology.
* Develop policies and programs to adapt to climate change in all sectors.
* Activating programs of participation of associations and non-governmental organizations to raise awareness in the fields of energy and natural resources conservation, especially the Nile River and natural reserves.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. **The Role of the Ministry of Environment in Implementing Sustainable Development Goals**

The Ministry of Environment plays an important role in achieving Egypt's vision for sustainable development and its environmental dimension. The work is done through two axes: reducing sources of pollution and conserving natural resources. The Ministry works in cooperation with ministries and other bodies in the field of monitoring to reduce sources of pollution. Inspection of more than 3,000 buildings during the period from mid-2018 until early 2019 to determine their compatibility with environmental requirements.

It was also emphasized that monitoring and inspection are not incompatible with development. Since the observance of environmental standards not only reduces pollution rates but also helps to increase productivity and competitiveness. In addition, the industrial pollution control program of the Ministry of the Environment helps companies to reach out to banks to obtain the necessary funding to adjust their environmental conditions and use environmentally friendly technologies. A number of companies have been assisted to provide a package of projects worth 25 million euros to adjust and solve the situation of a number of polluting companies.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Recommendations**

* The need to strengthen the legislative framework and penalties for the preservation and protection of the environment.
* To strengthen cooperation between the government and civil society to enter into renewable energy projects and to develop the general framework for action to achieve and implement the objectives of sustainable development in general and environmental dimension in particular.
* The imposition of criminal penalties on trespassing on rivers and seas as well as on nature reserves to preserve wealth and resources from extinction.
* Attention should be paid to the areas of scientific research in terms of energy and the environment. And, encouraging the shift to clean and environmentally friendly new and renewable energy resources.

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