The Arab States Drought Risk Dialogue

‘Managing drought risk in a changing climate -
The GAR Special Report on Drought 2021’

Agenda & Concept Note

Wednesday, 01 September 2021 (Zoom webinar)

Background

Globally, within the next 80 years, 129 countries will experience an increase in drought exposure mainly due to climate change alone, and 38 countries primarily due to the interaction between climate change and population growth (Smirnov et al., 2016). The way in which we understand and manage drought risk is directly linked to our ability to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Droughts have deep, widespread and underestimated impacts on societies, ecosystems and economies. They incur costs that are borne disproportionately by the most vulnerable people. The extensive impacts of drought are consistently underreported, even though they span large areas, cascade through systems and scales, and linger through time. They affect millions of people and many sectors and domains – such as agricultural production, public water supply, energy production, waterborne transportation, tourism, human health and biodiversity – contributing to food insecurity, poverty and inequality.

Climate change is increasing temperatures and disrupting rainfall patterns, thus increasing the frequency, severity and duration of droughts in many regions. As the world moves towards being 2°C warmer, urgent action is required to better understand and more effectively manage drought risk to reduce the devastating toll on human lives and livelihoods. The GAR Special Report on Drought 2021 emphasizes that while drought poses a significant threat to achieving the goals of the Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (Sendai Framework), this threat can be substantially reduced by applying prospective, proactive and innovative approaches to drought risk management.

Drawing on lessons learned from case studies around the world, the report argues that with what we now know about drought and its risk to societies, economies and ecosystems, we can and must do better at managing it. It calls for a sharper focus on prevention: shifting from reactive approaches to getting ahead of the curve by addressing the root drivers of drought and socioecological vulnerability, avoiding and minimizing risks.

It shows that increasing greenhouse gas emissions, together with the vulnerability of populations and ecosystems exposed to drought, are important drivers of drought risk. Addressing these facets are central...
to reducing drought risk. At the same time, the report stresses that it is crucial to address the human activities that intensify and propagate the impacts of drought.

In the Arab States Region, drought risk is increasing, related to increased exposure and vulnerability through population growth, pollution, conflict and insecurity, maladaptive practices like unsustainable use of water resources and unsustainable development approaches.

There are many drivers of drought that are all interconnected, depletion of ecosystems combined with climate change have increased severity of droughts and water scarcity.

The impacts of drought are largely indirect and impact a variety of sectors like water security, energy, agriculture, health, systems such as food systems, economic systems, infrastructure, urban systems, and society, while economic impacts remain largely underestimated.

However, many good practices around the world and from the region show that drought risk can be reduced, when we change the way we understand and manage drought. ‘The Arab States Drought Risk Dialogue’ wants to take this forward to help create a more sustainable future for all on a healthy planet.

**Objective of the webinar**

‘The Arab States Drought Risk Dialogue’ will unpack the latest findings on drought risk management from the Arab States Region, as featured in the GAR Special Report on Drought 2021. It will illustrate the challenges facing transboundary cooperation around water basins in a changing climate in the region, and the urgent need for new transboundary risk governance approaches to reduce drought risk with two case studies from the region.

The first case will feature the Mediterranean Basin and a 10-step drought mitigation approach, in the context of competing water needs for agriculture, energy and urban water supplies.

The second case will feature the diverse drought impacts in the Blue Nile region, affecting Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt and calls for urgent strengthening institutional mechanisms for collaboration, data collection, monitoring and data sharing.

With increasing drought risk in Iraq and Syria where poor winter precipitation is combined with very low coping capacity after years of conflict and international tensions over competing interest in water resources, the Drought Risk Dialogue will feature policy recommendations the GAR Special Report on Drought 2021 calls for to reduce drought risks immediately. Thinking ahead and acting in advance of drought has far lower costs than reacting and responding to the impacts once drought hits.

The event is tailored towards practitioners and policy makers working in drought risk and water management in the region, who will have the opportunity to ask practical questions to the authors of the report in a Q&A session following the panel discussion on the main findings.
**Draft Agenda**

**Date:** Wednesday, 01 September 2021

**Time:** 15:30 - 16:30 Amman Time / 14:30 – 15:30 Cairo Time / 13:30 - 14:30 Tunis Time

**Target Audience:** DRM national FPs from the Arab States, National Platform FPs from Ministries of Water, Economy, Planning, Agriculture etc., DRR practitioners from the region and beyond.

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<td>14:30 – 14:35</td>
<td>Opening Remarks</td>
<td>Sujit Kumar Mohanty, Chief of Office- UNDRR ROAS</td>
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<td>14:35 – 14:45</td>
<td>Keynote Address</td>
<td>Prof. Wadid Erian, Cairo University, GAR SRD Lead Author</td>
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<td>14:45 – 14:55</td>
<td>Case Study: Mediterranean Basin</td>
<td>Dr. Hesham El-Askary, Chapman University, GAR SRD Contributing Author (tbc)</td>
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<td>14:55 – 15:05</td>
<td>Case Study: Nile Basin</td>
<td>Khaled AbuZeid, Centre for Environment &amp; Development for the Arab Region &amp; Europe (CEDARE), GAR SRD Contributing Author (tbc)</td>
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<td>15:05 – 15:25</td>
<td>Moderated Discussion and Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Saira Ahmed, Risk Knowledge Programme Officer UNDRR</td>
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<td>15:25 – 15:30</td>
<td>Closing remarks</td>
<td>Sujit Kumar Mohanty, Chief of Office- UNDRR ROAS</td>
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