

Statement of

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to the

Commemoration of the International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms

“From Source to Impact: Protecting Land and Life from Sand and Dust Storms

UNHQ CR11 | 10 July 2025 | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the **United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms** and ESCWA, I welcome you to this **commemoration** of the **International Day on Combating Sand and Dust Storms**, and I extend my thanks to the **co-conveners** – the Governments of **Iran, Iraq, Mongolia** and **Senegal** – for their advocacy on this formidable challenge.

This year's observance comes at the dawn of the **United Nations Decade on Combating Sand and Dust Storms** – a Decade that reflects the growing recognition by Member States that sand and dust storms are not merely environmental phenomena, but a major obstacle to sustainable development.

For ESCWA's 21 member States, this challenge is both **immediate and profound**.

They disrupt livelihoods, strain health systems, damage infrastructure, undermining human security and productivity across multiple sectors.

While countries are feeling their impact with increasing frequency and intensity, sand and dust storms are fundamentally a **transboundary challenge**. Dust generated in one country can affect people and ecosystems in neighbouring states as well as thousands of kilometres away.

No country can tackle this threat alone. Effective action requires cooperation across borders, sectors and institutions.

In this regard, the **United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms** plays a critical role.

The Coalition brings together 21 United Nations entities and international organizations working from different socio-economic and ecosystem perspectives, providing a unique platform to promote coordinated action for the benefit of Member States.

As mandated in its terms of reference, the Coalition's work is organized through five working groups focused on:

- **Adaptation and Mitigation**, led by the FAO;
- **Forecasting and Early Warning**, led by the WMO;
- **Health and Safety**, led by the WHO;
- **Policy and Governance**, led by the UNCCD; and
- **Regional Cooperation and Mediation**, co-led by ESCAP and ESCWA

Together, these working groups help bridge science and policy, fostering collaboration across sectors and supporting countries to address both the **sources and impacts** of sand and dust storms, which is the **theme** of this year's international day.

Excellencies,

ESCWA is proud to serve as **co-chair of the Coalition** together with **ESCAP**. Through our joint leadership – and in collaboration with Coalition members – we have **planned and implemented activities** that advance the goals of the United Nations Decade on Combating Sand and Dust Storms.

This includes convening a series of interregional dialogues over the past 18 months and hosting the **Forum on Fostering Interregional Collaboration on Sand and Dust Storms** with Coalition members in Beirut in October.

Allow me to thus share an **important milestone** achieved in support of the Decade.

I am **delighted** to announce that – as an outcome of this dialogue series – ten countries served by ESCWA and ESCAP adopted the **Interregional Initiative on Combating Sand and Dust Storms in Western Asia**, which was launched last week in Istanbul.

The Initiative provides a framework for transboundary cooperation through a country-led **Western Asia Platform on Sand and Dust Storms** based on three expected accomplishments that aim at:

- **Policy coherence and consensus on joint approaches**
- **A common knowledge base; and**
- **Regional and multi-country actions.**

These efforts will be achieved through a series of **negotiated measurable deliverables** over a **three-year work programme** that takes us to the **mid-point review** of the **United Nations Decade on Combating Sand and Dust Storms**, with **monitoring, reporting and evaluation** a key component of the Initiative.

We thank the ESCWA and ESCAP member countries, UN Coalition members and multilateral development funds who contributed to this landmark launch event hosted by Türkiye, as a founding member of the initiative, alongside other members including **Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia** and the **Syrian Arab Republic**.

This Initiative demonstrates that **regional cooperation is not only possible** – even under the **most difficult** of circumstances – **it is essential and sought by member States**.

In closing, I would like to recognize the important complementary efforts being undertaken by ESCWA member countries.

Saudi Arabia has been advancing land restoration and early warning systems to combat sand and dust storms as UNCCC COP16 President and through its **Middle East Green Initiative** and **Sand and Dust Storm Regional Centre** in Jeddah, with whom ESCWA and the WMO cooperate to deliver training to Meteorological Services on sand and dust forecasting.

Iraq and Kuwait work together to conduct innovative research and interventions to mitigate sand and dust storms at the source and reduce their health impacts, with the support of our Coalition colleagues at UN-Habitat and WHO.

The **Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan and Lebanon** have underscored the importance of strengthening observation and multi-sector response capacities to address this growing challenge.

While countries in the **Sahel** are pursuing the **Great Green Wall**, with the support of UNCCD and multiple agencies to address sand and dust storms from a multi-sectoral lens.

Excellencies,

This International Day and the United Nations Decade offer a unique opportunity to transform political commitment into measurable action.

Let us seize this opportunity to strengthen cooperation across borders, sectors and institutions, and ensure that future generations inherit healthier ecosystems, more resilient societies and a more sustainable future.

Sand and dust storms do not respect borders.

Our response must thus be collaborative across countries and communities – as it is together that we can **protect land and life** from sand and dust storms.

ESCWA and the members of the **United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms** stand with you on this collective effort.

Thank you.