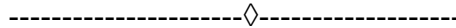




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Workshop 7

Environmental Policies in the Gulf

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Workshop Abstract

The Arabian Gulf region is one of the world's most naturally endowed and economically prosperous regions. It also scores well on several social parameters. It is the world's richest in oil and natural gas reserves the poorest in renewable water and arable land, and continues to rely excessively on natural resources as its development strategy. The countries of the Gulf are characterized by extreme arid climates, sparse natural vegetation, and fragile soil conditions. The GCC countries are mainly desert lands with the exception of the coastal strips, lagoons, khors and mountain ranges.

The Arabian Gulf region is characterized by rapid population and economic growth accompanied by excessive utilization of natural resources and environmental deterioration. As a result, the countries of the region are suffering from water scarcity, exacerbating desertification, loss of arable lands, soil erosion, ecosystem imbalance and loss of biodiversity, and increasing pollution. In the last three decades, development programs in the GCC countries were implemented without considering management and conservation of natural resources. the vision for development prioritized investments in infrastructure, industry, and agricultural development at the expense of natural resources.

The GCC countries represent a unique case of development, where oil and gas revenues have enabled an exceptional accelerated development process in all aspects of life. These countries have become a hub of intense geopolitical, military, economic, industrial, infrastructural, tourism and other anthropogenic activities.

Besides many similarities in geographical, political and economic conditions, the environmental features of the region are also very much alike. Therefore, environmental policies should be similar. Economic development and sound environmental management are two sides of the same coin. Development without adequate environmental protection is meaningless and can be counter-productive.

There has been a significant increase in national commitments to environmental issues and sustainable development in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Environmental institutions have been given higher priority and status, and the level of policy commitment has increased.

Environmental policy aims at correcting market and regulatory failures to improve environmental quality. Ideally, environmental policy should be designed to maximize the net benefits to society by achieving the optimal level of environmental quality. In practical terms, the determination of this optimal level is difficult because of both limitations in our understanding of both the physical and biological relationships and interlinkages in the environment and the difficulties in evaluating environmental costs and benefits in environmental terms. A more practical approach is to set environmental quality standards.

The immediate and the medium-term objectives of environmental policy would be to address the most urgent problems, such as threats to human health caused by poor environmental quality, losses, damage or destruction of natural resources, depletion and degradation of environmental resources and the deterioration of biodiversity.

Environmental policies should gain the most attention from the decision maker for environmental policies have many social, economic and even political dimensions. If

policies are well drafted and implemented executed then it can guarantee the ability of achieving the aspired sustainable development. Without these environmental policies, one can say the current trend in development can be described as destructive development. This is very clear in today's various environmental problems and climate change problems. In addition, environmental considerations should be taken in drafting any kind of policy on the central level, and the execution should be the responsibility of all institutions and individuals and not the environment authority.

Policy responses to environmental pressures and impacts play an important role in shaping the future state of the environment, and have often resulted in dedicated environmental legislation. At the same time, the determinants of future developments evolve and play out across a range of environmental issues.

There is a need to move environment and environmental policies from the periphery of the decision making process to its core.

The workshop offers a forum for discussing various aspects related to environmental policy in GCC countries such as Legislations, multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and Environmental policy, Water policy, climate change policy, and obstacles of executing environmental policies.

Workshop Description

The workshop will discuss various policy aspects from formulation, to application, monitoring and evaluation. Single country or regional environmental policies are both needed to be discussed. Specific environmental issue such as water, climate change will be also examined. International agreements influencing formulation of local environmental policies

Finally we are interested in debating "scenarios for environmental policies " for the region, effects the environmental policy on economic development.

2) Papers presented to the workshop may cover regional, country or thematic studies.

Regional, Country studies deal with how each of the region or individual Gulf countries is formulating and applying environmental policies. The various tools used. The pros and cons of each tool.

Thematic studies

Environmental policies for specific issues such as water, biodiversity, desertification, coastal and marine resources, and climate change. What has been achieved and what is still needed. Interlinkages between specific environmental issues policies.

3) Potential participants

In addition to scholars interested in various aspects of Environmental Policies in the Gulf region, we seek to encourage the participation of scholars from the countries of the Gulf.

Abstract Example

Mohamed A Raouf

Economic Instruments and Environmental policy in the GCC countries

Market-Based Instruments can play an important role in tackling environmental problems in the GCC countries. As a mean for achieving environmental management objectives, non-economic regulatory measures have been adopted worldwide as well as in the Gulf region. Now, Economic Instruments (EIs) are being increasingly implemented in many countries, both developed and developing.

Policy tools such as Command-And-Control (CAC) and EIs are used in various fields of life; however, in the field of environment in the GCC, where there is an urgent need to use both tools, the dependence has been solely on CAC.

Experience has shown that specific environmental problems are usually addressed by employing a “policy mix” consisting of various CAC instruments, EIs and awareness programs. This policy mix is needed to address various environmental issues too. This research paper explains the difference between CAC and EIs, their role and effectiveness in environmental policy, and presents some examples (case studies?) of EIs’ implementation drawn from international experiences.

The paper also examines the use of EIs in the GCC countries as well as the role legislations and Multilateral Environmental Agreements in relation to CAC and EIs. In addition to some selected international experience in applying EIs.

Water Resources Management Policies in the GCC Countries: Four Scenarios

The arid, oil-rich countries of the Arabian Peninsula are facing some of the most severe water shortages in the world. In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates (UAE)—rainfall scarcity and variability coupled with high evaporation rates limit the availability of renewable water resources. In recent decades inadequate water resource management, rapid population growth, and accelerated socio-economic development have created increasing demands for water that cannot be met by these scarce renewable sources. Groundwater is being over-exploited to meet mainly agricultural demands. Efforts to exploit technology have led GCC countries to build desalination plants, but these remain capital intensive, costly, and with negative environmental impacts. Treated wastewater is also available, but currently makes up only a small percentage of total water use in the region.

The region's supply-driven policy approach to water management gives inadequate attention to improving and maximizing water allocation and water use efficiency. There are few comprehensive, long-term water policies and strategies in the region. There is duplication and overlap in water agencies, as well as inadequate institutional capacity development and community participation. The situation is so dire that all the GCC countries are beginning to realize the necessity and urgency of instituting water policy reforms.

After an overview of water issues in the GCC countries, this paper explores four distinct development scenarios that these countries might choose to follow: Markets First, Policy First, Security First, and Sustainability First. The scenarios explore how social, economic, and environmental trends may unfold along divergent development paths, and what this might mean for water policy and the environment, as well as for the region's economic and social development.