



Options for a Nexus Coordination Mechanism for the League of Arab States

Mainstreaming the Water-Energy-Food Security
Nexus into Sectoral Policies and Institutions
in the Arab Region

PROJECT DOCUMENT

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List of Abbreviations

ACCWaM	Adaptation to Climate Change in the Water Sector in the MENA Region
ACSAD	Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands
AMCE	Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity
AMWC	Arab Ministerial Water Council
AOAD	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
CAMRE	Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the Arab League
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
LAS	League of Arab States
RCREEE	Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
WEF	Water-Energy-Food Security

1 Introduction

The Arab region is faced with growing pressures on the environment and natural resources, affecting human securities and eventually political stability. A Water-Energy-Food Security (WEF) Nexus approach can encourage and support on-going efforts in addressing these challenges. By fostering coordination and cooperation among the relevant sectors and eventually by policy coherence, a nexus approach can increase resource efficiency and support decoupling of economic development from use of resources and environmental pressure.

Against this background the project “Mainstreaming the Water-Energy-Food Security (WEF) Nexus into Policies and Institutions in the MENA Region” within the GIZ ACCWaM programme aims to identify entry points, processes and partners for WEF nexus mainstreaming, in order to add value to implementation of sectoral strategies and to contribute to cross-sectoral policy goals such as the SDGs and climate change adaptation.

One important step in the process of WEF Nexus mainstreaming in Arab regional policies and institutions is to **improve coordination and collaboration across sectoral activities, initiatives, policies and strategies within the League of Arab States (LAS)**. This will contribute to leverage cross-sectoral synergies and minimize trade-offs.

Several bodies within LAS play important roles in setting regional policy goals and developing strategies that are relevant for achieving water, energy and food security. In particular, **key departments and organizations** are the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity (AMCE), the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD). Other departments within LAS, as well as related organizations, could assume supporting roles in the process of strengthening cross-sectoral coordination within the League of Arab States and beyond.

The aim of this input paper is to identify institutional settings in favour of mainstreaming of a WEF-nexus approach within LAS. Building on international experience in policy integration, the paper compares different options for a coordination mechanism within LAS. Based on this input paper, the potential forms of coordination, as well as the mandate and the potential products of a nexus coordination mechanism, were identified in close consultation with relevant LAS Stakeholders¹. The prioritised form of coordination and cooperation is further detailed in the document “Regional Policy Guide”.

2 Lessons Learnt on Cross-Sectoral Governance and Policy Integration

In studying potential mechanisms for cross-sectoral coordination and mainstreaming of a WEF-nexus perspective in regional sectoral strategies, one can learn from past experience, on how environmental concerns - or the concept of sustainable development - have been incorporated into the decision-making procedures of sectoral policies. Several studies were

¹ During two missions to Cairo in October and December of 2016 interviews with the following key experts within LAS and other organizations were conducted: Ms. Jamila Mator, Head of the Energy Department, Ms. Shahira Wahbi, Deputy Head of the Energy Department, Dr. Bahgat M. Aboelnasr, Head of the Economic Studies Research Division, Dr. Hammou Lamraani, Water Department, Ms. Nada El-Agizy, Director, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, Dr. Mohammed At-Twajiri, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, Dr. Hussein Ihssan El-Atfy, Secretary General, Arab Water Council, Dr. Djamel Eddine Djaballah, Minister plenipotary, Environment, Housing, Water and Sustainable Development, Economic Affairs, Dr. Mohamed Zakaria, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, Cairo Office, Hagar El Didi, Senior Research Assistant at IFPRI, Dr. Clemens Breisinger, Country Programme Leader, Senior Research Fellow at IFPRI, and Ashraf Kraidy, Senior Advisor to the Energy Department.

carried out on environmental/sustainable development-policy integration in the OECD countries in the 1990s and early 2000s.

There are, in principle, three types of instruments to support policy integration (compare Jacob et al 2008): a) communicative instruments; b) organizational instruments and c) procedural instruments.

Communicative instruments set longer-term objectives to guide strategy development in the sectors concerned. They could involve, for example:

- including WEF-nexus-related provisions in overall (sustainable-development) strategies, or adopting a specific WEF-nexus strategy/action plan;
- obligations for sectoral departments to report on performance with regard to specific nexus indicators, etc.

Organizational instruments encompass institutional coordination mechanisms at high political levels or at the administrative level. They could involve, for example:

- amalgamation of departments responsible for water, energy, and food security;
- setting-up of interdepartmental coordination committees or institutionalising WEF-nexus working groups at various political or administrative levels, etc.

Procedural instruments could involve

- bureaucratic rules, such as the obligation to inform and consult other sectors on policy developments;
- instruments that aim to influence the direction of decision-making, e.g. by making a nexus perspective a prerequisite for funding of sectoral programmes;
- obligations to carry out assessments of the impact of WEF nexus within project or programme planning (similar to Strategic Environmental Assessments);
- requirements to include a WEF-nexus perspective in the assessment of new policies and strategies, etc.

Experience has shown that there are many different ways and many possible combinations of such instruments for supporting integration of sustainable development interests in sectoral policy-making. Communicative instruments are frequently applied by national governments, but due to their often non-binding nature, they regularly lack follow-up and enforcement. The success of organizational instruments, on the other hand, largely depends on the institutional mechanism's mandate and capacity to resolve inter-sectoral conflicts (Jordan and Lenschow 2008, Chap. 15). Experience with different institutional set-ups has further shown **the importance of cross-sectoral network building and policy learning in achieving policy change towards more cross-sectoral integration**. The fact that actors from the sectors concerned sit together or report to each other often contributes to mutual understanding and personal relationships that can facilitate informal processes of coordination. This mutual understanding can be supported by targeted staff training and awareness-raising activities in order to convince sector representatives of the benefits of taking a cross-sectoral, or WEF-nexus approach.

The importance of policy learning and awareness for successful cross-sectoral integration also implies that, besides conducive administrative set-ups for WEF nexus coordination, **increasing knowledge and public awareness can be powerful instruments in support of policy change** towards a more integrated WEF-nexus perspective. Consequently, coordination of sectoral strategies can also be supported by expert advisory bodies or targeted research programmes that provide expertise and recommendations on how

synergies from WEF nexus can best be exploited and trade-offs be minimized. Moreover, public opinion, non-governmental organisations or civil society organisations often play an important role in promoting sustainable development. Raising their awareness of the issue and providing opportunities for their engagement in strategy development processes can thus strengthen integration of the WEF-nexus approach to sectoral strategies.

In the end, the question will be whether expert recommendations are converted into political decisions, whether sectoral administrative bodies are encouraged to coordinate across sectors, and whether WEF nexus requirements will be enforced. These questions boil down to the crucial role of high level political will in mainstreaming a WEF-nexus approach.

3 Institutional Setting in the League of Arab States

The highest body of the league is the **Council**³, composed of representatives of member states, usually foreign ministers, their representatives, or permanent delegates. The council usually meets twice a year, in March and September, and may convene a special session at the request of two members. In addition, the **Summits of the Heads of Arab States** have become the league's highest-level meeting, during which leaders discuss major regional issues. Since October 2000, the summit has become an annual event. LAS is operated by the permanent secretariat, headed by the secretary-general. The secretariat is the administrative body of LAS and the executive body of the council. In addition, several standing committees have been established, with the **Economic and Social Council of the Arab League (ECOSOC)** being the most relevant one for addressing cross-sectoral issues.

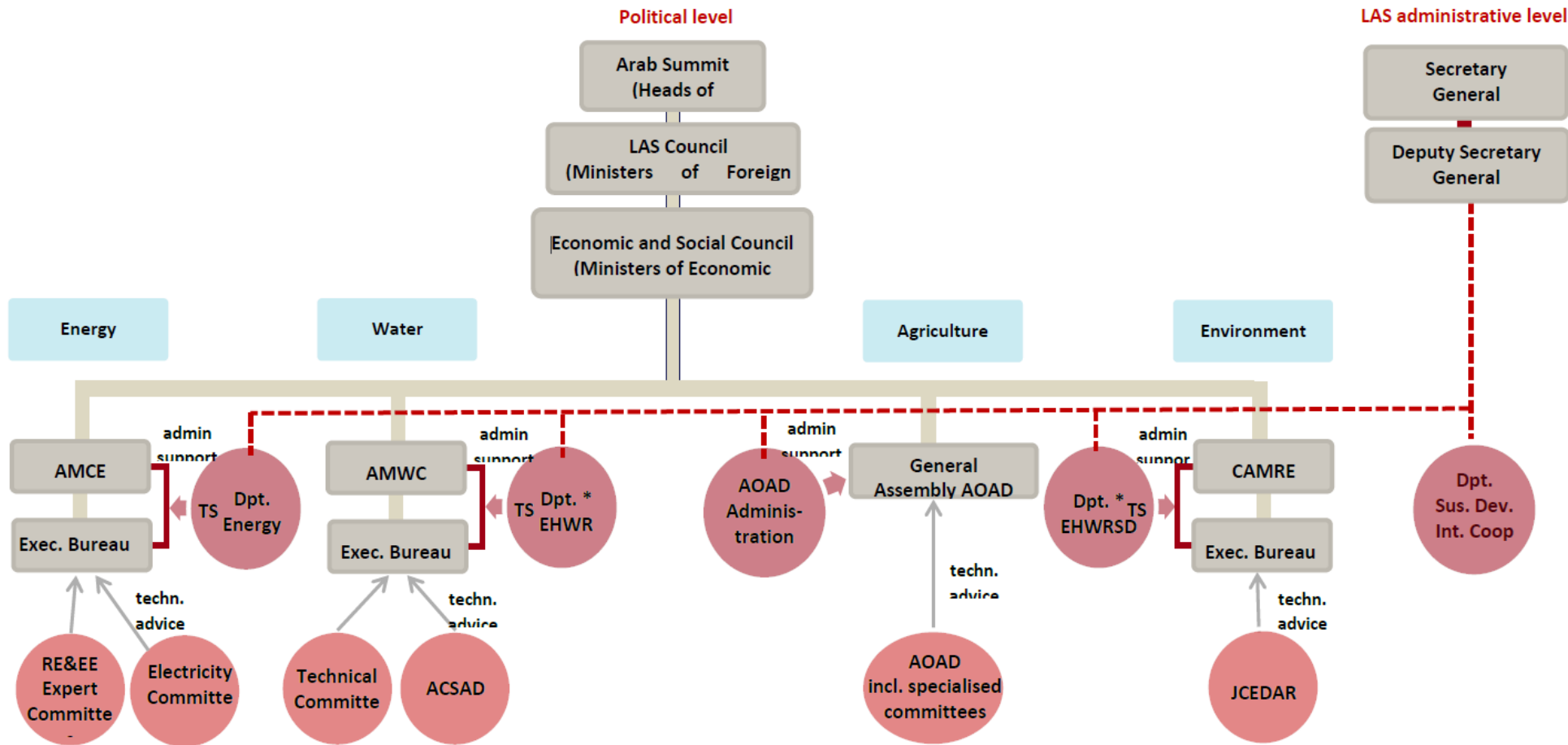
Several specialised **Arab Ministerial Councils (AMCs)** that cover sectoral issues have been established. The AMCs are responsible, among other things, for preparing the respective regional strategies. The most relevant ministerial councils for WEF-nexus issues are the **Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity (AMCE)**, and the **Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC)**.

For agriculture, no specialised ministerial council has been established. Instead, the **General Assembly of the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD)**, consisting of the Arab ministers responsible for agriculture, functions as the ministerial council. Moreover, the **Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs (CAMRE)** is relevant for WEF-nexus mainstreaming as it is responsible for cross-cutting topics such as adaptation to climate change and sustainable development.

Each of the councils, that usually meet every two years, consists of the respective ministers of all 22 LAS member states. The councils further have an **Executive Bureau**, consisting of a selected number of ministers, as well as of a **Technical Secretariat** that supports the respective ministerial councils in organizational procedures and is usually based at the permanent secretariat of LAS in Cairo. Moreover, several **specialised organisations** working within the framework of LAS further support the AMCs in technical matters, as for example on strategy development and implementation. In addition, **technical expert committees**, consisting of experts from several member countries, are consulted for technical support on special issues, as for example during strategy development. The institutional setting for WEF nexus within LAS is summarized in Figure 1. The following sections briefly describe the main WEF-nexus-relevant ministerial councils.

³ For more information on Internal Regulations of the Council of LAS see Haynes 1998.

Figure 1: Institutional Setting for Water-Energy-Food Security Nexus within the League of Arab States - selected relevant institutions



* Department for Environment, Housing, and Water Resources

3.1 Arab Ministerial Water Council

The Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), joining the ministers of all LAS member states responsible for water, was established in 2008 with the mandate of finding responses to the increasing water scarcity in the region. In 2012, it adopted the Arab Strategy for Water and Security in the Arab Region.

The Department for Environment, Housing, Water and Sustainable Development at the LAS head office in Cairo functions as the AMWC's technical secretariat and is commissioned by LAS to prepare and deliver input for the work of the AMWC. Moreover, the Center of Water Studies and Arab Water Security as well as the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) are specialised organizations affiliated to LAS and are commissioned by AMWC for certain tasks. ACSAD was commissioned to draft the Arab Water Strategy and was entrusted with developing an action plan for operative implementation.

3.2 Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity

The Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity (AMCE) was established by the League of Arab States in 1993 as a council in charge of overlooking issues related to the production, transmission and distribution of electricity, as well as renewable energy and energy efficiency. The objective of the council is promoting cooperation and coordination, and aligning policies among the Arab states to enhance the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency (IRENA 2014). In addition to the ministerial council itself, AMCE has an executive bureau consisting of ministers from eight member states that convenes once a year.

The AMCE Technical Secretariat is hosted by the LAS Department of Energy. Two technical expert committees support the work of AMCE:

- (1) Committee of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Experts and
- (2) Expert Committee on Electricity

Each consists of at least one expert per member state plus observing organizations such as the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE) (Otte, no date). The "Pan Arab Strategy for the Development of Renewable Energy Applications (2010-2030)" was adopted by the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in January 2013 as a framework for the joint Arab action in the field of renewable energy.

The development of this strategy is the outcome of all efforts exerted by AMCE and its technical secretariat, committees and specialized staff, in cooperation with experts from various agencies and organizations working in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency, that participated in the preparation of the strategy (LAS 2013).

3.3 General Assembly of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development

The Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) is a specialised organization under the umbrella of LAS. The General Assembly of the AOAD, which consists of the Arab Ministers of Agriculture, takes the equivalent role of a Arab ministerial council on agriculture. It was thus commissioned by LAS to prepare a strategy for sustainable Arab agricultural development for two decades (2005–2025), this being was drafted in 2007. The strategy development process was coordinated by the administration of AOAD, which acts as the responsible technical secretariat.

Unlike the other sectors, the technical secretariat responsible for agriculture is not based at the LAS headquarters in Cairo but at AOAD in Khartoum. AOAD drafted the agricultural

strategy together with a team of Arab experts (core team) that have been involved in various stages of the document's preparation. The results of the core team's work were presented to AOAD's specialized permanent committees, consisting of

- (1) Agriculture and Water Committee,
- (2) Natural and Environmental Resources Committee, and
- (3) Fisheries and Aquaculture Committee.

The General Assembly further commissioned the AOAD administration to report to the LAS ECOSOC during the strategy development and on the strategy implementation progress (LAS, 2007, p1-3).

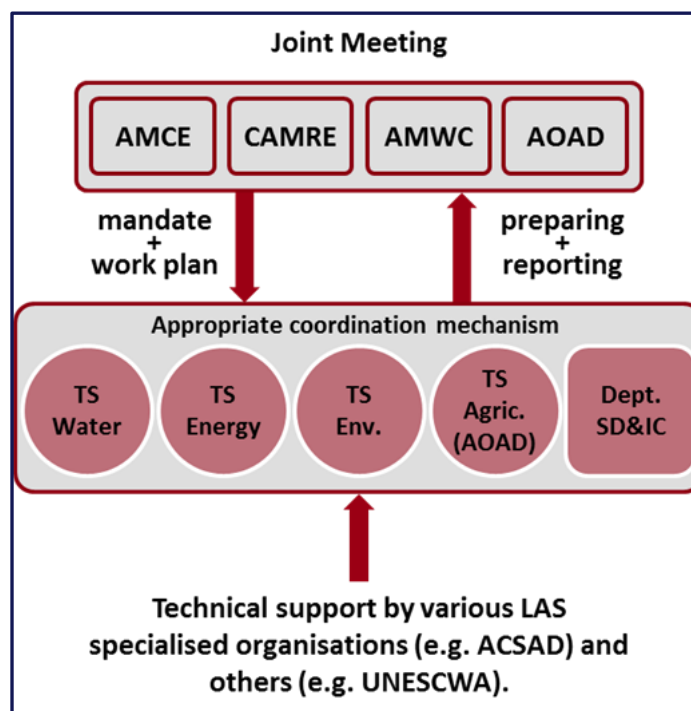
3.4 Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs

The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs (CAMRE) was set up to maintain coordination and cooperation among Arab countries in all matters related to the environment and sustainable development (Chnais et al. 2015). CAMRE is responsible for Nexus-relevant cross-sectoral topics including the "Arab Plan of Action to deal with Climate Change (APACC)" (2008), the "Arab Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development (2015-2025)"; the "Arab Strategy on Sustainable Consumption and Production" (2009) and the "Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020" (2010).

CAMRE is organized in a similar way as the other ministerial councils, with a technical secretariat based at the Department of Environment, Water, Housing and Sustainable Development and an executive bureau meeting twice a year. The Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) is the technical expert committee supporting the work of CAMRE and consists of experts from member states, as well as from international and regional organizations. JCEDAR convenes once a year and is organized into around ten standing working groups (e. g. working groups on meteorology, disasters and emergencies, sustainable development indicators, chemicals and dangerous substances, desertification and biodiversity, etc.) (Chnais et al., 2015).

A possible process to establish an institutional set-up for the LAS WEF-nexus coordination mechanism, which includes the above-mentioned institutions, is illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2: Proposed Process to Establish an Institutional Set-Up for WEF-Nexus Coordination Mechanism for LAS



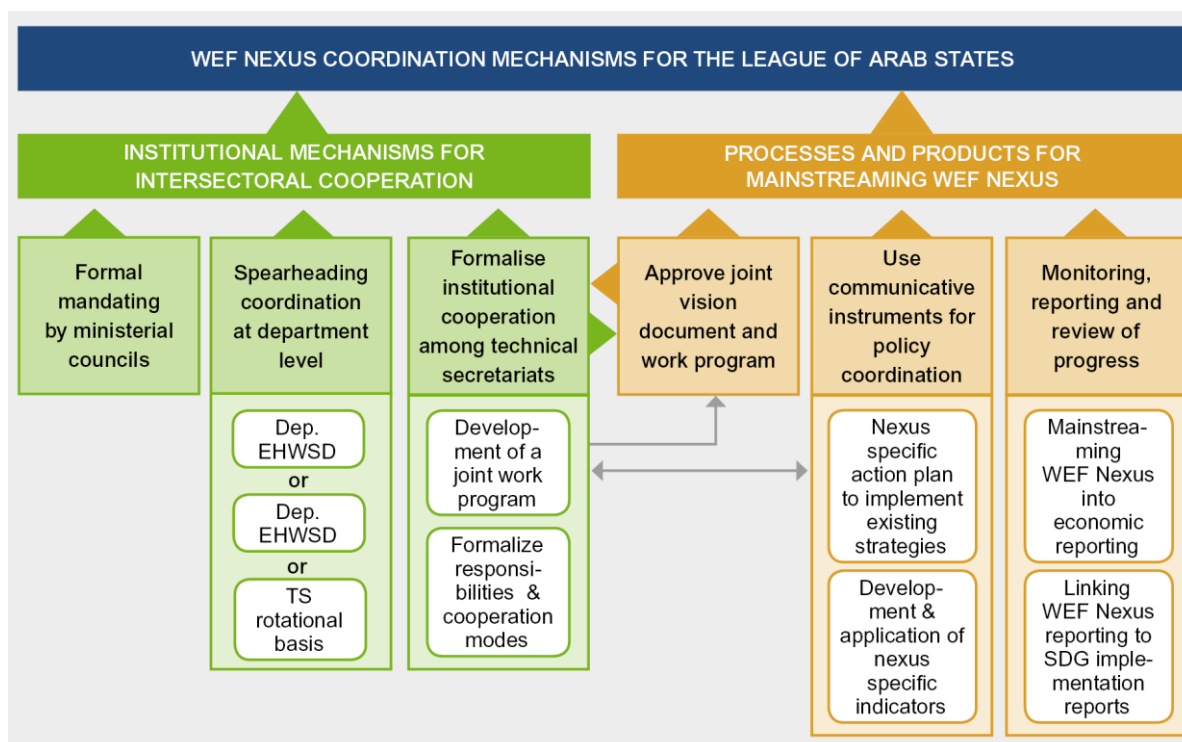
4 Options for a Cross-Sectoral Coordination Mechanism Within the League of Arab States

An institutional mechanism to steer cross-sectoral coordination within LAS can bring important benefits by realizing synergies and minimizing trade-offs between sectoral goals. Inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration in the activities of the various ministerial councils within LAS can support in particular the integrated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and integrated climate adaptation and mitigation, and can strengthen a Green Economy – thus ensuring long-term sustainable development within the region.

One of the main tasks of a nexus coordination mechanism could be to harmonize existing regional sectoral strategies and activities. The level of coordination to be achieved can range from preventing contradictions (no harm principle) to increasing overall benefits and adopting a truly integrated approach towards water, energy and food security, and sustainable development in the Arab region.

Institutional procedures or mechanisms to increase inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration within LAS could take different forms, ranging from a formalized inter-council structure, regular working groups or task forces to ad-hoc coordination meetings or side panels of workshops, such as for policy reviews, and annual planning. The following sections describe different options for institutional coordination mechanisms, including their advantages and disadvantages. Based on these, an appropriate mechanism for coordination was identified through consultations with key experts within LAS and other organizations. Options for WEF-nexus coordination mechanisms for LAS are summarized in figure 3. The prioritised mechanism for coordination is further detailed in the document “Regional Policy Guide”.

Figure 3: Overview Options for WEF Nexus Coordination Mechanisms for LAS



4.1 Inter-Ministerial Committee or Sub-Committee

Coordination between WEF-nexus-relevant ministerial councils could take place at the level of the ministerial councils themselves (inter-ministerial committee) or alternatively between the respective executive bureaus consisting of the responsible ministers from a selected number of member states (sub-committee). The advantage of coordination at this high political level would be the high level of decision-making power. In the case of LAS, however, the ministerial councils only meet every two years and the meetings are often not attended by the ministers of the member states themselves, but by changing representatives. This would make it difficult to achieve continuous coordination on WEF-nexus issues. Moreover, such a coordination mechanism would consist of representatives of different nation states with different development priorities. In addition to the difficulties of addressing the conflicting interests of the various sectors, this approach would further have to address the diverse priorities of the member states at all stages of the coordination process, which might risk a stalemate situation early in the process.

4.2 Coordination at the Level of Technical Secretariats

Given the challenges of establishing coordination at the level of the ministerial councils themselves, a more promising option for LAS seems to be through institutional coordination mechanisms at the level of the technical secretariats. Here, coordination could be institutionalised in the form of continuous or temporary/ad hoc working groups, or liaison officers.

4.2.1 Working Groups Involving Technical Secretariats

Working groups involving all relevant technical secretariats could be established on a permanent basis to help keep other technical secretariats informed about planned sectoral activities and policy developments. Another option would be to establish a temporary WEF-

nexus working group to address a specific coordination problem, e.g. on the occasion of major policy developments or reviews of existing strategies. The disadvantage of coordination at this administrative level is, that it has no decision-making power of its own as regards the regional sectoral strategies, but can only produce input into the decision-making process of the ministerial councils. Institutionalising coordination at this level can, however, provide opportunities for political debate and policy learning. This could be further increased by including selected members of the expert committees in the working groups.

Still, where the interests of the relevant sectors differ too widely to achieve a consensus, coordination at the level of technical secretariats may face a stalemate because of the lack of decision-making power to manage conflicting interests. The success of such a coordination mechanism would also largely depend on the manner in which it was chaired. There are different options for the chairing. One of the technical secretariats directly involved in the WEF-nexus coordination could take the role of the chair. Where appropriate, chairing could rotate between the technical secretariats. Another option would be to have the technical secretariat of CAMRE, for example, as the chair. Given the role that CAMRE plays in developing and implementing cross-sectoral strategies such as those of sustainable development, climate change adaptation and Green Economy, it could build on its experience by involving various sectors in strategy development.

4.2.2 Liaison Officers

Another form of coordination at the LAS administrative level of the technical secretariats would be to institutionalise so-called Liaison officers in each of the relevant ministerial councils. These would have the task of observing activities and policy developments in other sectors, of providing information on any risks of overlap or contradiction, and of identifying synergy potential. They could also provide advice on how to prevent overlap and contradictions. Liaison officers could also play a role in establishing informal relations and information exchange, and provide a quick and efficient way of identifying conflicts of interests and proposing potential solutions to them. On the other hand, if trust is lacking and turf battles between sectoral technical secretariats prevail, it will be difficult to fulfil the tasks of a liaison officer.

4.3 Coordination at the Level of Specialised Agencies

Given the important role that specialised agencies play in preparing sectoral strategies and implementation plans, fostering coordination across the relevant specialised institutions and technical committees could be a means to achieving sectoral policy coordination early on in the strategy-development process. Coordination at this level would again have to be chaired, e.g. by the technical secretariats, and specialised agencies would need to be given a clear mandate to support WEF-sector coordination.

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