

**Draft Remarks
CVF Regional Workshop on Climate Change Policies
for the Middle East and North Africa
Lebanon PM, 28 May 2015**

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, let me express my heartfelt appreciation to the Lebanese Government, through Amb. Najla Riachi Assaker of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon in Geneva, for hosting today's event. Our sincere thanks go as well to the UNDP upon whose untiring efforts we are able to conduct this workshop and exchange views and experiences on climate change-related policies.

This regional workshop comes at a time when we have only six months left before Paris hosts the *21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*, where we expect to see a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Framework that will be applicable to all Parties. Our respective countries are now engaged in intense negotiations to beat the deadline.

Unfortunately, the impacts of climate change itself do not follow the same manmade timeline. As we await the future of the talks, our coastal communities continue to face an encroaching sea. As we define our Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, our countries remain at risk from extreme weather events like supertyphoons and prolonged droughts. As we consider the historical responsibility of nations and everyone's current accountability for the future, questions about livelihood and food stability reveal all of our vulnerabilities.

This is why we do not wish to wait for deadlines before we act. The time to act is now. As Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum or CVF – a group of 20 countries from various regions of the globe that are particularly vulnerable to climate change – the Philippines places importance on raising the awareness of the international community on the very real and damaging impacts of climate change. As stated by our Climate Change Commission, we do not want to be remembered merely by the disasters that come our way, but by our resilience in rising above calamities. We refuse to be statistics. We have to be proactive.

We will intensify the role the CVF as a venue for sharing and exchanging knowledge and expertise with other countries in order to further inform policy-making. With help from the UNDP, we in fact hosted the CVF regional meeting for Asia in Manila only last week from 20 to 21 May 2015. The workshop adopted ten recommendations to enhance regional response, including the further engagement of the media, private sector and civil society. We will be happy to share with you these recommendations – available in the CVF website – as an input to your regional workshop.

Another key aim of our chairmanship is the strengthening of linkages across different sectors. For instance, in the recently concluded World Health Assembly, the

Philippines called on the body to collectively support measures within and outside the health sector that will address the effects of climate change. On human rights, labor, and migration and displacement, the CVF requested and received respective reports from the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment, the Ruby Coast Research Centre and the Nansen Initiative – all of which reaffirmed the need to review our goals in the UNFCCC, particularly the 2-degree goal.

I hope that this workshop will not only bring to fore these issues but in fact come up with fresh and bold ideas on how we can best move forward in the road to Paris and beyond. I understand from the UNDP that this workshop marks the first occasion when countries of the Middle East and North Africa have been involved in the CVF. Your region is highly vulnerable too; for example, it has been repeatedly visited by extreme drought while the IPCC expects the zone to become even drier and hotter. Past major aridity events have been associated with important movements of people. Furthermore, current conflicts add pressure to populations already exposed to the impacts of climate change.

While the manifestations of vulnerability vary enormously, the four previous regional meetings for Asia, Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific have shown us that many of the solutions to our concerns take similar forms and therefore signal potential areas for cooperation. I wish you the best in this workshop and look forward to working with you in other CVF activities in the future. We will definitely keep you informed about the Global Consultation in Bonn next month on the outcomes of this and other regional meetings.

Thank you.