



Regional Project for the Governance and Development of Knowledge

# Observatories and Indicators on the Environment and Sustainable Development in Morocco and Tunisia

## Final Memorandum

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September 2015



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## 1 Context

South Mediterranean countries, more specifically those concerned by the “*Observatory and Indicators on the Environment and Sustainable Development*” project i.e. Morocco and Tunisia, have engaged in an environmental policy and action plan for more than twenty years, progressively heading towards a wider and more integrated sustainable development policy.

This new integration, increasingly faced by decision makers in both countries, further complicates the planning and implementation of environmental and sustainable development plans and programs, more and more difficult to control. New forms of human and financial governance, management and optimization of resources must be implemented and progressively operated to overcome new difficulties arising in the two countries.

This new governance targeted by both countries, mainly in the field of environment and sustainable development is conditioned by control of information in the two respective areas, and the availability of decision making tools for various decision makers at all different planning levels to help them to reach set objectives, correct their policies and approaches and inform different stakeholders about various trends.

In spite of efforts made in this domain over the previous decades, Morocco and Tunisia, still suffer from a major lack of accurate information in the fields of environment and sustainable development, especially the absence of pertinent, accurate, and regularly calculated data and information, commonly accepted by different stakeholders. This problem seriously impedes the implementation of efficient policies in the field of environment and sustainable development.

The “*Environment and Sustainable Development Observatory and indicators*” project mainly aims at contributing to filling this gap in Morocco and Tunisia in order to reinforce governance in the field of environment, and more generally sustainable development both at the national and regional levels. It also aims at providing decision makers and all stakeholders, including the population, with more and better tools to achieve their goals.

In practice, the implementation of observation and follow up mechanisms of the environment and sustainable development in the two countries has been ongoing for many years. Morocco and Tunisia can rely on a twenty-year long experience in this domain. In a first phase, the national dimension was privileged in the two countries; today, the regional dimension is more considered by politicians and decision makers. Morocco has already invested in several regional observatories. Tunisia is about to institutionalize already engaged regional observation and follow up mechanisms, and now focuses on developing its national information system, both digitally and geographically.

Different investigations conducted in the framework of this project covering more than a year since May 2014 have stressed specific priority areas which need to be further developed in the next period in order to make of the information systems currently used in

the two countries real systems used to support decision making in the fields of environment and sustainable development.

This memorandum is a synthesis of the final report, summarizing key results and recommendations yielded by activities conducted in the framework of the “*Environment and Sustainable Development Observatory and Indicators*” project in Morocco and Tunisia, with the purpose of sharing experience at the Mediterranean level.

## 2 Better control of environmental and sustainable development indicators

In general and to properly monitor the state of the environment, hence contribute to sustainable development, observation mechanisms in the two countries have focused since their implementation on periodically choosing, selecting, and calculating indicators that would together provide answers to the follow up and evaluation of different policies set up in subject areas.

In this regard, the Moroccan and Tunisian systems have accumulated a large experience and considerable know-how in terms of the choice, calculation, follow up, and interpretation of indicators. Several projects have been conducted in this area in the two countries, contributing to the launch of very pertinent products and information systems related to indicators.

Nevertheless, despite the accumulation of experience and data on indicators, the different information systems in the two countries still need to have good mastery of approaches and methods in order to make the best and most efficient use of indicators generated by their investigations, and hence support environmental and sustainable development policies.

In this regard, it is necessary to stress that indicators which constitute the key element of observation systems, shall by no means represent the ultimate goal; on the contrary, they must represent ways to illustrate, interpret and monitor important phenomena or issues in areas considered that are of interest to the environment and social development. Environment observatories must therefore focus on their activities, identify and characterize major environmental and social development issues of concern to various stakeholders. National and regional observatories, in partnership with the main stakeholders acting in the field of sustainable development will continuously work to identify the main issues related to the environment and sustainable development that need to be regularly monitored by means of indicators in order to provide the best response to corresponding policies.

Regarding access to data necessary for the production of indicators, it is crucial to make the difference between already available data produced by other parties and data not yet produced on a regular basis, required by observatories to build on their indicators. With regard to the first type of data, well designed convention procedures along with rigorous follow up should provide the opportunity for regular access to data. However, in the case of unavailable data, new activities must be initiated by different national and regional observatories to start partnership projects with various stakeholders according to their

specialties, to progressively set up networks and monitor the different components related to the environment and sustainable development, hence provide answers and compensate gaps currently faced in terms of missing data.

The current systems used to monitor the milieu, most of which are poorly developed, will become much more pertinent and efficient if directly or indirectly connected to existing systems operating in the field of the environment and sustainable development. Their results will consequently be directly exploited and mainly valorized in studies and research concerning the state of the environment. At the same time, the new synergy with sustainable development mechanisms will create new dynamics that will have a positive influence on current sector-based activities.

### 3 Development and valorization of information system outputs related to the environment and sustainable development

Information systems developed in the fields of the environment and sustainable development, both at the national and regional levels, will be required to regularly publish their products and share their results in order to inform the public and various stakeholders involved in the development process, and contribute to making more appropriate decisions.

The choice and design of information systems' outputs must be guided by some major principles, including the following:

- Outputs must contribute based on a progressive approach to changing behaviors and planning modalities in the management of space, production and consumption;
- Outputs must provide clear and accurate answers to issues considered to be crucial and outstanding; they must help to understand complex situations and show ways to settle and overcome subject issues;
- Outputs must also offer the possibility to highlight major issues that have so far remained invisible or incomprehensible by the large majority of the public and decision makers, which may if not taken in consideration, impede major development processes;
- Outputs must be simple, easy to understand and communicative;
- Outputs must as systematically as possible bring prospective information about phenomena and trends observed and analyzed.

The dissemination of all types of outputs is mostly done in print both in Morocco and in Tunisia, i.e. in a relatively limited number. As a consequence, several stakeholders do not profit from these outputs and from information regularly generated by various national and regional observation mechanisms. With such a little outreach, the impact on the public and on different stakeholders involved in the development process will remain limited. Communication tools available today offering easy access may considerably increase the scope of these systems and break the lines between various outputs and a larger public.

National and regional systems must very rapidly invest in the design and development of dynamic and open websites that can be easily accessed by the larger public, offering and sharing results of studies and works conducted in the field of the environment and sustainable development in Morocco and in Tunisia.

#### 4 Regionalization of environmental and sustainable development observation mechanisms

The regional dimension of observation systems used to monitor the environment and sustainable development differs between Tunisia and Morocco. Unlike its relatively privileged national positioning, Tunisia has not focused as much on observing the environment and sustainable development at the regional level. This is mainly due to the fact that since the beginning, Tunisian observation missions have focused on the national dimension rather than on the regional one, but also because the issue of observing the environment and promoting sustainable development has never been clearly defined as a priority at the regional level. The discrepancy between the national observatory and the regions was felt when drafting regional reports about the state of the environment in Tunisia, usually considered tedious and tiring for the national observatory due to its weak institutional capacity at the regional level.

A draft decree is currently prepared in Tunisia, calling for the creation of regional observatories for the environment and sustainable development in the six main regions of the country. As suggested in this decree, regional observatories will be in charge of:

- Identifying and following up the main issues related to the environment and sustainable development at the regional level ;
- Data collection and development of organized databases;
- Creation and development of networks for the observation and follow up of the state of the environment;
- Drafting a report on the state of the environment and the main development issues in the region;
- Providing guidance to decision makers about the most suitable development and environment protection options.

Unlike Tunisia, Morocco has already planned to create 16 regional observatories i.e. one in each region. The first observatory was created in 2009 followed by the others. 14 observatories have so far been launched based on specific conventions signed between 2009 and 2011. The operation rate of the regional observatories in Morocco varies, as 12 are already operational, 1 is in the process and the last one is being set up.

Nevertheless, in spite of considerable efforts made for the development of regional observatories in Morocco, their analysis showed some constraints that are mainly institutional and organizational, which have to be quickly settled in order to ensure the

efficiency of these systems and provide them with the tools required to properly support decision making in the field of the environment and sustainable development.

The main institutional constraint has to do with the absence of a statute regulating regional observatories. In spite of well defined tasks and missions, regional observatories have no legal identity, which may seriously impede their development in the future. A clear statute with well defined assignments will further reinforce the position of regional observatories in their respective regions and will offer them better visibility with regard to other regional institutions for the sake of partnership and collaboration. If regional observatories are supported by well defined and regulatory statutes, their roles and responsibilities will be more visible and clear, especially vis-à-vis other institutions directly or indirectly concerned by the environment.

As for the organizational constraints, they mainly concern the operation of the data collection network and governance bodies. While the Organizational Decree has formalized the data collection network by identifying technical committees, their members, chairmanship, roles and missions, data supply by partners, and data collection methods have not been clearly defined. These will have to be described and formalized to ensure the sustainability of regional observatories as their operation greatly depends on the full involvement of stakeholders.

To overcome these challenges, the following recommendations have been stressed by the study and interviews held with stakeholders:

- Design of specific conventions detailing modalities for the sharing of data between partners and regional observers;
- Development of a legislative and legal framework to provide access to environmental information based on principles stated in the Aarhus Convention (measures at the national level), namely by the adoption of Draft Law n. 13-31 related to access to information (discussed at the Government Cabinet Meeting on January 30, 2014);
- Appoint partners' focal points with their alternates to ensure continuity of the process;
- Develop lists of data and indicators based on actual conditions and partners' ability to produce and update them;
- Develop a range of region specific synthetic indicators to be used by decision makers in the form of a dashboard.

The last measure was also highly recommended when testing synthetic indicators in Tunisia in the framework of the two pilot region projects: Jendouba and Medenine.

## 5 Reinforce the exchange and sharing of know-how between different information systems at the country's national and regional levels

Information systems set up by countries, regardless of their size, in the field of the environment and sustainable development have to be interconnected within an integrated network to offer easy transmission of data between different components and to ensure homogeneity and harmony at the level of analyses and investigations so that individual efforts can be better exploited and impact the entire country.

In Tunisia, the Tunisian Environment Observatory (OTEDD) finds itself, according to the conceptual diagram designed in the study, at the core of the national integrated information system working on the environment and social development. It will have special and complementary relations with the six regional observatories. The regional observatories will have exchange and partnership relations with the different regional structures and institutions holding data and information. Similarly, and at the national level, OTEDD will have equivalent exchange and partnership relations with national departments, most importantly with the National Statistics Institute.

In Morocco, the operational interpretation made from the analysis of regional observatories conducted during the first phase of the study recommended the implementation of an exchange and improvement process at the level of the environmental information system between different regional observatories, jointly with the national observatory. To do this, suggestion was made to design a computer application to be used as a platform for formal exchange between regional observatories, the national observatory, and with other sector-based governmental institutions (agriculture, energy, health, water, tourism, etc...), research experts, civil society, as well as with other networks and observatories concerned by the environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean Region. The design of the computer tool took in consideration functional needs jointly identified with key stakeholders concerned by the environment and sustainable development.

## 6 Reinforce institutional and legal aspects regulating environmental and sustainable development observation systems

The juridical and institutional framework of observation and information systems related to the environment and sustainable development in Morocco and Tunisia still suffers from deficiencies and requires sustained efforts to make of existing mechanisms a real leverage in the institutional landscape, equipped with appropriate capacities to properly perform their tasks.

In Tunisia, the juridical and institutional framework of the National Environment Observatory (OTEDD) constitutes, according to observers and officials, the main obstacle impeding the development of the system. In fact, OTEDD has never been institutionalized in the form of an independent and autonomous entity capable of developing required partnerships to properly undertake its tasks and promote its operations.

A project to institutionalize OTEDD was launched in 2014 by the Secretary of State for the Environment and a decree was drafted in this regard but is still pending at the level of the Prime Ministry. It is necessary today to speed up this process and ensure the emergence and development of observation in the field of the environment and sustainable development at the national and regional levels.

In Morocco as well, in spite of institutional and juridical developments mainly concerning regional observatories most of which have already been established, it is necessary to reinforce this framework. The juridical identification of regional observatories seems to be a fundamental requirement for their development and for their contribution to setting up efficient policies in the field of sustainable development.

The promulgation in March 2014 of the National Charter on the Environment and Sustainable Development as a Framework Law (Law N. 99-12) presently constitutes the most appropriate framework for the institutionalization of regional environment and sustainable development observatories. In fact, this framework-law includes an entire Chapter on Environmental Governance (Title V) providing for the setting up of structures, institutions, mechanisms and procedures mainly for the permanent follow up of the quality of the environment and the collection of data and information related to the state of the environment and the exploitation and dissemination of data (Article 24).

There is also a provision to redefine the structure and missions of existing institutions in charge of protecting and improving the environment taking in consideration principles and objectives stated in the framework-law (Article 26).

## 7 Development of regional cooperation to follow up the environment and sustainable development

Today we note that in spite of national developments for the follow up of the environment and sustainable development, cooperation between countries and regions is very limited and is almost inexistent. This is even more surprising when we know that delegations of different countries have met several times in environment and sustainable development related events and have repeatedly stressed the value and importance of exchanges.

Problems faced by each country can find solutions, or at least hints for solutions by sharing experience and good practices. This fact was confirmed during the two events held in the framework of the project bringing together Tunisians and Moroccans to discuss similar issues in Marrakesh, and also Moroccans, Tunisians, and French from Poitou Charentes to debate the regional dimension of environment and sustainable development observatories.

In order to maintain this excitement often characterizing meetings and events, it is necessary to formalize and institutionalize this type of exchanges based on cooperation and sharing principles in the framework of flexible conventions that can develop and grow along with their progress.

## 8 For further information

The various products achieved within the framework of the "Observatories and indicators of the environment and sustainable development" are available from the Blue Plan (Plan Bleu) or on the project website ReGoKo <http://regoko.planbleu.org/>:

- **Observatories and indicators in Morocco:**
  - Analysis of the current information system and environmental accounting in Morocco
  - Setting up an exchange system for the benefit of regional observatories of environmental and sustainable development
- **Observatories and indicators in Tunisia:**
  - Analysis of the current information system and environmental accounting in Tunisia
  - definition of an action plan for strengthening the information system on the environment and sustainable development in Tunisia
  - test of the approach and synthetic indicators proposed for Tunisia
- **Support and capacities strengthening of observatories of the environment and sustainable development in Morocco and Tunisia and their key partners**
  - Report of a study tour to the regional observatory of Poitou-Charentes in France
  - Minutes of a capacity building workshop and exchange of national and regional monitoring systems of the state of the environment and sustainable development