



- Water-related activities in ESCWA are entrusted to Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD). In the context of the ongoing Trade and Environment Project for the Gulf Region and Yemen, SDPD examined the fisheries sector in the Gulf States in 2002. The Gulf Countries were found to be aware of the need to implement sustainable development fisheries and have welcomed the plan of implementation resulting from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). A number of Gulf Countries suffer from pollution that results from passing ships in the open seas and from illegal and unsustainable fishing that depletes the fish stocks upon which they depend for food security and export. In this respect, ESCWA has worked with government and private sector representatives to emphasize the importance of developing and implementing sustainable fisheries policies, also within the context of trade liberalization to maintain a competitive edge and to ensure long-term benefits. ESCWA convened a technical workshop in coordination with other regional organizations to exchange information and experience in this sector.
- A team of water experts from SDPD will undergo an explanatory mission to Kuwait. The purpose of the mission is to identify and investigate the problem and various factors contributing to the apparent increase in the Gulf water salinity. As an outcome of the mission, a report will be produced providing 1-Clear description of the problem encountered, 2- Preliminary analysis of the extent and scope of the problem based on the collated data, providing initial assessment of the problem, and 3- Relevant recommendations for the course of action that need to be followed in the future.
- The Energy Team within SDPD has investigated the impact of the energy sector on the environment, including the greenhouse effects on marine and coastal environment.
- On another front, the threat of a third war in the ESCWA Region is looming in the horizon. Based on experience from the first and second Gulf wars the region, military conflicts proved devastating to the marine environment. Using a scenario of a marine and/or ground military invasion, and given the semi-enclosed shallow nature of the Persian Gulf, the following impacts on the marine environment can be predicted:
  1. Military operations will amplify costs of insurance, reduce accessibility to seaports and augment risks of maritime transportation in the Gulf, Arab Sea, Red Sea and Suez Canal. This will lead to lower trade in goods and hinder the flow of oil, gas and petrochemicals to the rest of the world. Sharp increases in oil and gas prices will have severe repercussions on world economy and development.
  2. Massive oil spills to deter landing of marines on the shore lines of the Gulf will lead to the destruction of the sensitive marine ecosystem, including coral reefs, fisheries, coastal lines, sea birds, sea grass, turtles, etc.
  3. Oil spills might drift to seawater power-desalination plant intakes to deprive countries in the Gulf from their electric power supplies and their sole source of drinking waters.
  4. During bombardment of industrial facilities, power stations, petrochemical and refining establishments; toxic fumes can be emitted and hazardous chemicals can be released to the marine environment causing severe damage to ecology and public health.

5. In the unlikely event of using chemical warfare agents (CWA) and/or biological Warfare Agents (BWA), the natural environment will be toxic to humans, animals and plants. The damage to the marine environment will vary according to the nature of the agent (blistering agents, nerve agents, lacrimating, etc.), means of its delivery/dispersion, its concentration and the prevailing meteorological conditions.
6. Destruction of wastewater treatment plants, collection systems and sewage pumping stations will compel inflicted cities on coastlines to discharge their raw wastewaters to the sea leading to massive fish kills, propagation of infectious diseases and spreading of epidemics.