

## **AGORA Monthly Arab Digest**

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### **The role of Parliaments in Mitigating Climate Change and Promoting Renewable Energy**

The energy sector has a vital importance for the economic and social development in the Arab States. It effectively contributes the Gross Domestic Product and secures the energy supplies to all economic and services sectors. However, the energy sector is characterized by unsustainable production and consumption patterns, severe shortages and power cuts as well as several adverse impacts on the environment. The use of renewable energy (RE) is one of the most effective methods of mitigating climate change.

The Arab region enjoys large untapped potential in terms of wind and solar energy. REs can thus play a significant role in the energy mix of the region to help reduce the adverse environmental impact of fossil fuels, as well as satisfy increasing energy demand. Thus there is an urgent need in the region to enact policies that mitigate climate change and reverse the exploitation of environmental resources.

### **What can Parliamentarians DO?**

Legislators have a wide range of tools that are needed to reduce carbon emissions while ensuring energy access for all specifically by drawing up and implementing national policies and programs promoting renewable energy initiatives. Parliamentarians have a key role to play in supporting the development of sound environmental policies concerning the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. They can develop policies concerning mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and, where political space is available, institute the framework required to reduce or remove the barriers to the establishment of a renewable energy industry

The Parliament has three core functions, each of which provides an entry point for the promotion of renewable energy development: Law making, Oversight and Representation.

## Concretely speaking parliamentarians can:

### a. Law Making and Legislation

Develop or amend new and/or existing legislation that will provide a new legal framework conducive to the development of renewable energy. An inclusive and participative process is highly encouraged to ensure to gain momentum, garner media and political attention and will. Suggesting amendments to draft laws is sometimes more timely than developing new laws given the time required for drafting, deliberating and negotiating new laws. Similarly, amending existing laws require drafting changes to the select parts of the law that are necessary to improve the current scheme for energy development.

### b. Monitor Government's Commitment to Renewable Energy

As an oversight body, the parliament can hold the government to account by questioning whether the passed laws are properly implemented. Check whether a funding or tax incentive schemes allocated in the state budget and verify that funds are sufficient for achieving the goals.

*In a nutshell, necessary human and financial resources and policies are being provided to implementing departments.*

### c. State Budgets and Funding

Parliaments consider, approve and monitor the implementation of the state budget. Parliaments may have the ability to directly or indirectly influence the content of the state budget to encourage more resources and incentives for the development of renewable resources either individually by spurring a debate about the need for more investment in renewables if parliament allows, or collectively by working with their parliamentary group, a parliamentary committee or with civil society.

Once the budget is passed, the role of the parliament shifts; A member can then work with parliamentary committees that have a mandate to scrutinize government expenditures, such as a Public Accounts Committee or Budget and Finance Committee, to ensure the funds allocated are properly spent.

### **Current situation and trends in the Arab Region**

The energy potential in the Arab States has been long recognized yet it is still underutilized. Several states have declared objectives towards RE contribution and many initiatives already exist, notably the Experts Committee for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency established by the Arab League. Subsequently, Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates have dedicated national RE agencies or departments.

However, two cases still prevail in most of the region, the absence of effective laws and/or the improper implementation and application of clear and transparent procedures and rules. Thus the existence of a proper legislative framework is key for effective promotion and use of RE sources i.e. access to grid, pricing, subsidies and contractual obligations to name a few.

#### **➤ Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy**

Framework construction including strategies, policies and legislation are quickly developing in the region. Morocco leads with very ambitious targets, generates largest share of electricity from renewables and has the biggest number of RE projects. Jordan ranks second as it has created a favorable environment for investment by introducing a specific law on Res, feed in tariffs and preferential purchase pricing. Egypt which ranked third, has not only laws that encourage private investments, subsidies and tax exemptions but also a dedicated area/land for development of renewables. Tunisia and Palestine rank fourth respectively yet while Palestine has opened its market for external investment, Tunisia is still not open for large scale private investments.

For more information, please visit our Areas of Expertise on [Environment and Climate Change: the role of Parliaments](#), [Parliaments and Renewable Energy](#).

## What is being done?

The *Parliamentary Action on Renewable Energy* project (hereafter PARE), is a jointly implemented project by UNDP and the Climate Parliament. It was launched in 2012 with the aim of promoting renewable energy development by creating national and regional networks of Parliamentarians who advocate for the necessary legal reviews and frameworks in their respective parliaments. PARE is currently implemented in 10 countries, of which 4 in the Arab region: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.

Within this framework, a 4-day Hearing Session for Parliamentarians was held in Morocco on October 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>. The hearing focused on the challenges and opportunities for financing renewable energy with a special focus on the key barriers faced in the Arab States. It brought together legislators from developing countries with three countries represented namely Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan which all have vast renewable energy potential, and which are all severely threatened by climate change. MPs were joined by experts on renewable energy technology, policy, and investment, for a productive discussion on how legislators can attract significant investment to renewable energy in their countries.

For more information, please join the [Climate Parliament Network](#) group on AGORA.

**For questions or comments, contact the AGORA Team at [info@agora-parl.org](mailto:info@agora-parl.org).**