

2014-2017 Plan of Action
Pursuant to the United States - Oman Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation

The Joint Forum on Environmental Cooperation (“Joint Forum”) established pursuant to the United States - Oman Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation, hereby defines a Plan of Action for 2014 through 2017 that establishes specific goals, objectives and areas for cooperation that reflect national priorities for each Government.

Background

The Government of the United States (“United States”) and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman (“Oman”) executed a Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation (“MOU”) on February 20, 2006. In so doing, the Governments recognized the importance of protecting the environment while promoting sustainable development in connection with expanded bilateral trade under the United States - Oman Free Trade Agreement (“FTA”).

Through the MOU, the Governments established the Joint Forum on Environmental Cooperation (“Joint Forum”) with a mandate to: (1) develop a Plan of Action that identifies priority projects for environmental cooperation and to update said Plan as appropriate, in light of changing circumstances; (2) review and assess cooperative environmental activities undertaken pursuant to the Plan of Action; (3) recommend ways to improve cooperation; and (4) undertake such other activities as the Governments may deem to be appropriate.

The implementation of the MOU and the Plan of Action shall be in accordance with the laws and regulations of the United States and the Sultanate of Oman.

Plan of Action Goals

Through implementation of this Plan of Action, the Joint Forum seeks to achieve the following long-term goals:

- Effective implementation of the Environment Chapter of the FTA, including with respect to obligations to: (1) ensure that environmental laws provide for high levels of environmental protection, and strive to continue to improve those laws; and (2) not fail to effectively enforce such environmental laws;
- Protection and conservation of the environment, including natural resources, and promotion of sustainable development; and

Public participation in environmental issues in accordance with domestic laws and practices

Priority Areas for Cooperation

The Joint Forum establishes the following priority areas for cooperation with corresponding objectives. These priority areas reflect the “Selected Areas for Environmental Cooperation” listed in the Annex to the MOU (see MOU, Section 3 Paragraph 1).

1. Institutional policy strengthening for effective implementation and enforcement of environmental laws

Objectives: To work together to (1) help Oman to ensure that its laws and policies provide for and encourage high levels of environmental protection and to continue to improve those law and policies; (2) strengthen the capability of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA) and other concerned Omani organizations to effectively enforce environmental laws and regulations; and (3) exchange information and experiences on environmental law compliance and adjudication and other approaches to environmental protection and natural resource management, including through market-based mechanisms such as air pollutant emissions trading for nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide.

Potential Activities:

- Assist Oman to update and strengthen the primary environmental laws and related regulations, including the Law on Protecting the Environment and Preventing Pollution and the Regulations on Controlling Air Pollutants Emitted by Immobile Sources.
- Exchange information and experience concerning approaches to enforcement and compliance with environmental laws.
- Provide key expertise to review existing environmental legislation and identify key areas, critical requirements, and assist with the structuring of appropriate proposals.
- Hold technical joint environmental seminars on topics to be agreed upon, such as assessing environmental impacts, climate change, chemicals, and waste management.
- Exchange information and best practices on implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) and other multilateral environmental agreements.

2. Environmental disaster preparedness

Objectives: To support environmental disaster preparedness through capacity building programs and other collaborative activities in the review and preparation of contingency mechanisms for oil spills, cyclones and other disasters.

Potential Activities:

- Support the development of a comprehensive strategy for the management of disasters and training of specialists in the Sultanate.

- Further support the development of an Omani Incident Command System and training of government officials in the system.
- Undertake exchanges and study tours for technical experts and delegations from both Governments.

3. Promoting sustainable and inclusive management and conservation of environmental resources, including biodiversity and other ecosystem services, protected wild areas, and other ecologically important ecosystems.

Objectives: Work with national, regional, and local governments, and seek opportunities for multilateral and civil society cooperation, to (1) promote and encourage the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and all of its components and levels, including plants, animals, and habitats; (2) promote the sustainable use and management of natural resources; and (3) promote effective management of terrestrial and marine protected areas and other ecologically important ecosystems, including by reaping the benefits of traditional knowledge and realizing economic benefits of conservation.

Potential Activities:

- Strengthen management of protected areas and implementation of new and/or existing management plans.
- Develop and provide instructions/training to implement a natural resource management curriculum for Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs officials working on environmental and natural resource management and the environment.
- Support Omani participation in conservation fellowships and protected areas management training.
- Support efforts to educate and inform the public about protected areas management, endangered species conservation and sustainable tourism.
- Technical assistance and capacity building to assist Oman to enact CITES implementing legislation and establish a scientific authority.

4. Improving clean production processes, building resilience to climate change, and encouraging the adoption of sound environmental practices and technologies

Objectives: To enhance environmental performance across all sectors through (1) the adoption of sound practices and strategies for cleaner production; (2) voluntary mechanisms; and (3) public-private partnerships, in a manner consistent with maintaining international competitiveness.

Potential Activities:

- Facilitate public-private sector collaboration among Omani and U.S. companies, business associations and financial institutions to increase the capacity to adopt cleaner, environmentally friendly and economically-efficient production methods.
- Develop and strengthen the capacity of MECA to facilitate public-private partnerships.

5. Promoting environmental education, awareness, transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making and enforcement

Objectives: To share experiences on (1) involving the public in decision-making regarding environmental matters; (2) enhancing openness and transparency in the development of environmental legislation, regulations and policies; and (3) implementing environmental education strategies and programs.

- Potential Activities: Pursue activities to increase participation from a wide spectrum of Omani citizens in environmental discussions, workshops and forums.
- Increase understanding and use of methods for public participation in environmental issues.
- Support public awareness campaigns on endangered species conservation and reducing wildlife trafficking.
- Invite the public to participate in technical Joint Seminars held on environmental issues.

Resources

The objectives and activities set forth in this Plan may be updated and modified by future consultations between the Governments, and the implementation of activities is contingent upon the availability of funding and other resources.

Benchmarks, Monitoring, and Evaluation

As the Joint Forum continues to further define cooperative programs, projects and activities, it will encourage implementing partners under the Plan of Action to identify performance indicators and benchmarks to measure the progress made in accomplishing or otherwise furthering the goals and objectives of such programs, projects and activities and to facilitate public reporting of such.

The Joint Forum intends to obtain and consider input from relevant local, regional and international organizations regarding relevant environmental conditions, indicators and views on the utility of cooperation under the Plan of Action. The Joint Forum also plans to encourage public participation in setting goals and implementing environmental collaboration, and to make information on activities carried out under the Plan of Action available to the public on a regular basis.

The Joint Forum recognizes that a variety of government agencies and civil society groups will be involved in implementing the programs and projects under this Plan of Action, and that the agency or group that leads implementation for a particular program or project will strive to be responsible for public participation, information disclosure, and performance tracking related to that program or project. The Joint Forum recognizes that, for each project, both sides will designate points of contact through diplomatic channels. Thereafter, designated points of contact may work directly together.