

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to foreword the “State of Environment Report” of the Arab Republic of Egypt for 2006, which is issued for the third time successively as a significant step in the political environmental commitment of the Government of Egypt (GoE). This comes in the framework of the keenness of Egypt’s political leadership on incorporating the environmental dimension in all fields for achieving sustainable development, and from its belief that protecting the environment has become a necessary requirement to protect the People’s health and empower it to achieve optimum utilization of natural resources.

This Report is issued in compliance with Law no. 4/1994 on Environment Protection, which stipulates in its Chapter Two on developing an annual “State of Environment” report to be submitted to the President of the Republic and the Cabinet, with a copy thereof deposited in the People’s Assembly.

This report comes as an outcome of efforts of many competent experts and those concerned with the environment in Egypt, as well as institutions, ministries, and authorities concerned who collectively collaborated in developing this report with the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA).

State of the Environment Report for 2005 included a comprehensive analysis of all available data and information about the elements of the environment in Egypt, which were represented in four parts: Air, Water, Land, and Urban Environment.

It was agreed that a comprehensive report, similar to that of 2005, could be issued every five years. For the intermediary years, the report would address one of the four chapters in detail, while presenting a summary of the most significant changes that occurred to the environmental elements included in the other three parts.

In light of this agreement, this report aims at highlighting in details the most important changes that occurred during 2006 in all components of the first chapter i.e. Air. This element includes air quality, noise, climatic changes, and ozone layer protection.

The report then reviews in less detail the key changes during 2006 in the other three elements, namely, Water, Land, and Urban Environment.

This year’s report includes, in addition to issues addressed in 2005 report, a new issue which is the expansion of the urban area and informal settlements.

We all know that Egypt, as most of the countries seeking economic and social development, faces a number of environmental problems. This is the result of significant population increase and expansion in industrial, agricultural, and tourism activities to achieve economic development that meets the needs of such population growth. This has placed a significant pressure on natural resources and was coupled with increased rural-urban internal migration tripling urban population in Egypt over the last two decades, which represents more pressure on the urban environment in general.

Currently, environment preservation dialogue focuses not on pollution issues, but

rather on the rational utilization of different natural resources and the prevention of practices and activities likely to result in depleting them. These resources actually constitute the main stock for development processes and one of the rights of future generations. To this effect, Egypt has devoted unfailing interest in environment issues.

Meanwhile, environment preservation issues have topped world concerns as one of the crucial questions at stake locally, regionally and globally.

The President of the Republic has thus vested great interest in the environmental preservation issue during recent years. It began with his Excellency's words in one of his speeches inaugurating a People's Assembly session that preserving the environment has become a necessity not a luxury. It has become an issue on which relies the ability of Egyptian citizens to lead a safe life and enjoy good health enabling them to produce and innovate. The President has crowned his support to environmental issues by his request to the People's Assembly to amend a number of articles in the Egyptian Constitution so that the amended constitution would incorporate an article stipulating environmental preservation.

Having been approved by the People's Assembly in a public poll, the amended constitution was then issued including Article 59 stipulating that "Environment preservation is a national duty", and that "the Law shall regulate measures needed to maintain sound environment". Stipulating in the constitution that environment preservation is a national duty will undoubtedly promote all State efforts represented in government agencies, NGOs, civil community organizations, and the private sector towards

achieving a sound environment for decent life for Egyptian citizens.

The Philosophy of environmental action in Egypt briefly rests on striking a balance between economic and social development requirements, on the one hand, and rational utilization of natural sources and wealth on the other.

The Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA) has a clear vision of the accumulated environmental problems in Egypt and is fully aware that they need to enlist the cooperation of the various organizations and institutions in Egypt, particularly civil society organizations.

The Ministry is doing its utmost to ensure environmental preservation and pollution prevention in the light of many challenges for safekeeping the health of the Egyptian citizen and the rights of future generations to our natural resources.

MSEA hopes to improve the state of the environment year by year.

I hope that this report would communicate in part of the improvement achieved in 2006.

May God Guide our way

***Minister of State for
Environmental Affairs***



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