

[1st Africa / Middle East Expert Meeting and Workshop on the Health Impact of Airborne Dust](#)



via [Barcelona Dust Forecast Center](#)

[The first Africa / Middle East Expert Meeting and Workshop on the Health Impact of Airborne Dust](#) has been held in Amman, Jordan, 2-5 November 2015 to assess the state of knowledge and encourage countries' actions with regard to impacts of airborne dust on public health in the region.

The opening ceremony (picture) was presided by the Jordan Minister of Environment, **H. E. Dr. Taher Shakhshir**, and featured speeches from representatives of the supporting institutions: **WMO**, the **World Health Organization**, the **U.N. Environment Programme**, **EUMETSAT** and **AEMET**, the State Meteorological Agency of Spain.

The Expert Meeting and Workshop will promote active communication among dust-related service providers, African/Middle-Eastern national meteorological and hydrological services and relevant national and international environment, air-quality and public health agencies.

As recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO), particulate matter (PM) affects more people than

any other pollutant. PM consists of a complex mixture of solid and liquid particles suspended in the air. Mineral dust is one of its major components and by far constitutes the dominant fraction over most of the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region. In recent years, much of the MENA region is suffering from the increased intensity and frequency of dust storm episodes bringing daily economic activities to a stand-still and causing major public health havoc.

Meeting participants encouraged the continued joint efforts of WMO and UNEP to establish the West Asia Node for the **Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System (SDS-WAS)** involving the Regional offices of WMO and UNEP, Barcelona SDS-WAS Regional Center and all interested countries of the region.

The need for action on sand and dust storms was underlined by a major dust storm which swept through Jordan as the meeting took place, severely obscuring skies and impacting air travel.

Most models contributing to the WMO SDS-WAS managed to predict the dust event. The operational forecast of the Barcelona Dust Forecast Center showed the formation of a dust cloud in Northern Saudi Arabia moving westwards over Jordan and Israel, as actually happened. The dusty weather has been followed by rain and thunderstorms.

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