

## Report

### Event on “High-Level Policy Dialogue” for Municipalities – Nexus Thinking and Decentralization of Subnational Governments”

**Maison de L’exportateur (CEPEX), Tunisia 28 – 29 June, 2022**

#### Summary

The Royal Scientific Society – NERC organized an event at Maison de L’exportateur (CEPEX) in Tunisia on 28 and 29 June 2022 titled a “High-Level Policy Dialogue” at municipal level. The event focused on empowering and catalyzing the municipalities’ role to run environmental projects within the nexus framework through a decentralized scheme; allowing municipalities to generate funds in compliance with the local legislations so that to enhance livelihood in the community.

The event enabled the participants representing various entities from Tunisia to acquire information and knowledge on access to finance and the nexus approach from a variety of regional experts and to engage in enriching discussions that facilitate the sharing of experiences and initiatives both from a national and a regional perspective. These covered the challenges currently being faced by municipalities, the lessons learned from previous experiences and projects, and recommended solutions and suggestions.

The event concluded with a series of recommendations that aim to improve access to finance and mainstream the nexus approach through innovative financing mechanisms and facilities, capacity building, awareness raising, gender empowerment, and community engagement.

## Contents

<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSIONS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Day - 1 .....	4
SESSION I .....	4
PANEL DISCUSSION: .....	5
SESSION II: .....	5
PANEL DISCUSSION: .....	5
SESSION III: .....	6
Day - 2 .....	7
SESSION I .....	7
FIELD VISIT .....	7
INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION: .....	8
CLOSING SESSION .....	8
AGENDA (DAY 1) .....	9
AGENDA (DAY 2) .....	12
LIST OF PATICIPANTS .....	13

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Royal Scientific Society (RSS) – National Energy Research Center (NERC) in Jordan organized a meeting at Maison de L'exportateur (CEPEX) in Tunisia, on 28 and 29 June 2022 titled “High-Level Policy Dialogue” at municipal level, targeting the project municipalities in Tunisia: Manouba Municipality and Raoued Municipality.
2. The main objective of the workshop was to stimulate debate on the role of municipalities in climate action as an opportunity for municipal transformative economic growth but also as a means to increase overall climate resilience at different governance levels, and to catalyze the municipalities’ role to run investment projects within the nexus framework through a decentralized scheme; allowing municipalities to generate funds in compliance with the local legislations so that to enhance livelihood in the community.
3. The meeting was attended by 38 participants representing various local, regional, energy, and nexus experts, municipalities, NGOs, government ministries and entities, UN organizations, private sector, financial institutions, and research institutions from Tunisia.
4. The meeting spanned over two days and consisted of five sessions and field visit. Section II of this report summarizes the meeting’s recommendations while Section III provides a summary of the presentations and the main topics of discussions held during each session. Section IV reviews the organization of work, including information regarding the workshop agenda, and participants. The full documentation of the workshop is available at the following address: [www.minaretpoint.com](http://www.minaretpoint.com)

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The meeting concluded with the following findings and recommendations:
  - a) Promote the application of participative, integrated, and holistic approaches and multi-stakeholder engagement, coupled with the strong involvement of municipalities and the community, when planning and preparing nexus renewable energy (RE) projects and proposals.
  - b) Establish a Climate Change Committee at the National level, to bring all stockholders together in a network, (as new form of governance or as a system of sectoral governance), in order to: share information, success stories, experiences, lesson learnt on the climate projects managed by municipalities; and centralize the climate information regarding municipalities climate projects, achievements, GHG inventories, success stories
  - c) Empower the municipalities and equip them to properly take on new responsibilities and leading roles in implementing decentralized tasks at the local level under the local rules, regulations, and constitutions.
  - d) Build the capacity of municipalities on the identification of projects and sources of funding; development of project proposals and feasibility studies; specific thematic areas such as RE technologies, waste management, and the water-energy-food nexus; and on planning, implementing, and monitoring nexus projects. This will empower municipalities and enable them to better access finance to develop and implement projects which carry lower risks and boast high levels of feasibility.
  - e) Raise the awareness of municipalities on the available ways to access finance for nexus projects and on the benefits of integrating RE technologies such as solar photovoltaic (PV)

pumping into irrigation and solar PV into water desalination to reduce costs and increase the feasibility and sustainability of such projects.

- f) Leverage the private sector's interest in investing in the energy sector to help finance nexus RE projects with low-interest loans, especially in the agricultural sector.
- g) Increase financial support for Nexus RE projects submitted by municipalities to incentivize and increase their involvement while also planning and applying gender mainstreaming from the onset of any project to be implemented.
- h) Promote the use of social media and digital communications platforms to form virtual networks to share and exchange knowledge, information, and opportunities related to the nexus and RE technologies and applications.

### III. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSIONS

Presentations and discussions are summarized in the following sections which are organized according to the substantive sessions of the workshop.

#### Day - 1

**SESSION I:** Opportunities and challenges of municipalities in natural resources management.

The first session was opened with a key presentation given by Climate Change Expert on water-energy-food (WEF) interlinkages which highlighted the indispensable interaction between these three resources that are in high demand in Tunisia, and how the keys to an integrated and successful approach for the WEF nexus lay in the political commitment and clear policy framework, improved governance and financing incentives, establishing clear dialogue between sectors, establishing a national development agenda and a data management plan.

The expert through the presentation has shown how Tunisian municipalities have a very significant direct and indirect responsibility for GHG emissions, and that the institutional organization in Tunisia is very centralized, so that the planning and the decisions process in terms of the development model are taken at a central level, which reduces the room for maneuver of local authorities in the implementation of Tunisia's climate commitments. The expert further elaborated on how the constitution of 2014 and the law of local authorities 2018 supported the role of municipalities as an actor in the development and economic, social and cultural promotion of the municipality, offering municipalities the possibility of influencing mitigation and adaptation actions in a significant way. Municipalities can transcribe the global climate protection objectives not only at the local level but on a larger territorial scale (inter-municipal plans/projects i.e. waste collection and recovery, etc.) The Expert added that municipalities are also concerned by the provisions of Law No. 2015-49 of November 27, 2015, relating to public-private partnership contracts (PPP), which offers them additional opportunities for financing certain projects: participation as local planning tools, and that LDP as local planning tools, can represent the general framework under which we can develop the policy of the municipality in the mitigation of GHGs within its borders and this via a set of projects agreed in a participatory manner with local inhabitants. Other tools available to municipalities for sustainable management of natural resources: a) land use planning with urban development plans (reduction of soil sealing, etc.), b) the local level: the municipalities collaborate with all the decentralized sectoral administrations for the implementation of their projects.

Despite a favorable regulatory framework, the municipalities do not yet have the management of development in their territories and they are not yet in a position to play the role of the engine of the expected development.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION:** Promoting Integrated Approaches to Water, Energy and Food Nexus At Municipal Level.

Ensuing discussions confirmed that government institutions in Tunisia should use the tools and mechanisms already available to develop and implement Nexus policies and projects instead of creating new institutions to do so. On the other hand, participants identified the insufficient coordination between institutions in planning and implementing nexus strategies, policies, and projects as an impediment to progress. Hence, it was recommended that participative, integrated, and holistic approaches are to be used with the strong involvement of municipalities. For this purpose, municipalities, which are in direct contact with citizens, need to be empowered with capacity building and trained human resources so that they can play a bigger role in the planning, implementation, and monitoring phases of any nexus-related initiative. In addition, awareness raising on the Nexus and its interlinkages should be raised to change the mindset and then be expanded in universities with research targeting integrated approaches.

In Tunisia, it was stated that investment funds for RE and energy efficiency (EE) exist, yet the agricultural sector remains the sector with the least benefit from the funds although it uses most of the water resources in the country and significant amounts of energy. To address this mismatch, it was recommended that a legal framework is needed with relevant and clear solutions to financing coupled with increased awareness raising and capacity building for farmers on the benefits of RE and EE and the available ways to access finance for nexus projects. Equally important, the private sector's interest in investing in the energy sector should also be leveraged to help finance nexus projects, especially in the agricultural sector. Community engagement and gender empowerment also represent important entry points for small-scale projects that need financing.

## **SESSION II:** Operationalizing The WEF Nexus: Nexus Governance Setting

Session started with a presentation given by Director General of Environment and Quality of Life, Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment, who highlighted the pandemic-related challenges, but also stressed positive developments, including regeneration of flora and fauna in certain ecosystems, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

"Tunisia is a very vulnerable country, it takes up the immense challenge represented by the current upheavals: its geographical position. We are experiencing climate extremes and water stress that continue to accentuate" said the Director. These challenges embrace: disparate lack of the necessary environmental services for the quality of life (sanitation and waste disposal, green areas, etc.) and decline of agricultural land due to urban expansion and cities inflation, continuous risks of pollution, notably the risk of chemical and organic pollution and their negative impacts on people who live in cities and the urban environment; failure of preventing equipment and tools against the negative impacts of natural hazards and climate change.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION:** Municipal Governance Through Nexus Lens

It was highlighted that many innovative WEF nexus-related technologies are suitable for Tunisia for their simple and cost-effective implementation and for their job creation and income generation potential.

The panelists stressed on the factors that must be taken into consideration when assessing Nexus projects and their effect on the whole value chain they target: economic feasibility, safety standards, and integration. For example, the problem of water saltiness, which requires high



amounts of energy and associated costs for desalination that makes it unfeasible for agricultural use. Proposal of integrating renewable energy, namely solar PV technology, to reduce the energy cost and ensure the sustainability of desalination on the long term. This will require the involvement of municipalities who will further highlight the importance of integrated approaches towards successful implementation of similar initiatives.

Representatives from municipalities, ANME, STEG and Ministries stressed on the dire need of developing the urban and territorial laws in light of the new constitutional principles including those enshrining decentralization, and sustainable development; supporting the legal and institutional framework relative to fighting against resources scarce; simplifying facilities and administrative procedures and delays of preparing and reviewing the development plans; establishing a legislative basis to apply the participatory governance among Tunisian municipalities and develop partnerships and cooperation between local authorities.

### **SESSION III: Local Efforts Through Climate Policy**

Presentation was facilitated by the Director of Adaptation, Ministry of Environment about The Role of Municipalities as in NDCs. Which indicated that Tunisia submitted its nationally determined contributions for the first time to the international community during 2016 as stipulated in the Paris Climate Agreement, and ratified by the Tunisian state on October 17, 2016. Tunisia pledged to reduce carbon emissions (net emissions compared to gross domestic income) by 41 percent, and updated these contributions during the year 2021 based on expanded consultations involving all parties concerned with climate change from Ministries and public structures, as well as representatives from the private sector, civil society and a group of experts, and led to raising the ambition of this contribution.

Nationally Determined Contributions were decided on September 2021 to become 45percent. Vulnerabilities were also reviewed at the national level according to more accurate climate forecasts. This has included auditing sectors of water resources, agriculture, ecosystems and tape coastal and health, and took into account three new horizontal dimensions:

- Gender,
- Soil preparation,
- Reducing the risks of natural disasters.

In order to ensure reducing the growing repercussions of climate change, especially in the field of security food, water security, health, natural and ecological resources and systems, and promoting the economic and social development that take into account the fragility of groups and regions.

From another hand, Tunisia has strategized its adaptation actions that contribute to reducing poverty and enhance the human well-beings, taking into account regional balance and the rights of all social groups in sustainable development and justice, dedicated to the principles of decentralization and social economy and solidarity.

The Director, through his presentation shed the light on the effects of climate change and how visible are becoming in cities with the acceleration of sprawl, The Director further talked about the elements of fragility of the urban planning patterns: planned and unplanned (slum) urbanization on low-lying lands and on the rainwater flow lines, and the absence of the infrastructure necessary to withstand the extreme phenomena of climate changes (heavy rain in a limited time, severe waves with a high level sea surface). All of these factors set limits to the traditional and applicable planning for urban development of cities.

“The goal of flexibility in urban planning and development incorporating the effects of climate change, reduce the differences between regions and local groups in favour of more equitable and climate-resilient development” the Director added.

## Day - 2

### SESSION I: Creating Economic Value Through a Circular Economy Approach

Visual presentation facilitated by a representative from the National Sanitation Utility focused on the general orientations of the National Sanitation Utility's (ONAS) policy to improve citizens' living conditions, protection of the environment and preservation of water resources. It further pinned down the main areas of focus for ONAS in Tunisia to: pursue the national efforts for sanitation services in urban environment and, more particularly, in the Governorates with connection rates below the national average rate; improve the living conditions of low-income citizens based on implementing a new strategy for the National Sanitation; extend the sanitation services to small towns, with a view to improving the citizens' living conditions and safeguard of natural resources; pursue the sanitation of population settlements in rural zones, with a view to improving the citizens' living conditions and to being in line with the drinking water supply programmes, and this, based on the implementation of a new lot of the rural sanitation programme concerning rural localities with a population of over 3000 inhabitants; improve the quality of treated wastewater based on the extension and upgrading of the wastewater treatment plants having reached a saturation state due to the country's urban and economic growth; raise the treatment capacity in Greater Tunis, Greater Sousse, greater Sfax, Nabeul/Hammamet, Monastir and djerba/Zarzis to make up for new treatment needs due to the large-scale investment projects to be implemented in this zone, and most importantly to improve the quality of purified water through the extension and rehabilitation of wastewater treatment plants which have reached the saturation point by regarding the urban and economic evolution of the country; implement an action plan for the management of the sludge produced by the wastewater treatment plants; scale up the reuse of treated wastewater in the various fields of development; increase the direction towards sanitation technologies, modernize treatment systems and processes by using modern, efficient, rational, energy and ecological technologies; and foster the participation of the private sector in the operation of sanitation infrastructures.

### FIELD VISIT: To Resources Development Project within an Integrated and Sustainable Development Framework

On day two, the attendees went into field visit to an innovative initiative “The GDA Sidi Amor”, located not far from Tunis on a hill covered with forests and scrubland, constitutes a **resource development project within an integrated and sustainable development framework**, making nature conservation a "springboard" for multiple actions. of training and development.

The environment project was initiated in 2006 by a small group of local residents, under the impetus of Dr. Taieb Ben Miled, the initiative behind the GDA Sidi Amor aimed to develop abandoned agroforestry land. In terms of land, these lands inherited and/or recently purchased by the group totaled an area of approximately 7 hectares. From the outset, the project was extended to the entire Sidi Amor site, identified as a remarkable natural site and worthy of a citizen conservation and development project. In this context, several steps were taken with the supervisory authorities and correspondence was sent to them.

The objective of the GDA Sidi Amor is to integrate innovative initiatives into the local development of its area, taking into account the enhancement and conservation of the environment. The strategic axes are:

- Promote plant resilience in the face of global changes.
- Improving and sustainably enriching crop production.
- Improving the role of the forest in rural development.
- Promote the prevention of forest fires and fires.
- Manage water resources to facilitate forest adaptation to climate change.
- Restore degraded forest areas through reforestation and biodiversity diversification operations.
- Develop knowledge, training and communication on the Sidi Amor site and Mediterranean forests in general, in order to strengthen international cooperation.
- Adapt existing financial mechanisms and create innovative financing mechanisms to support the implementation of strategies and programs in relation to national and local policies on Mediterranean forests.

## INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION:

At the margins of this visit, an interactive discussion with Tunisian UNFCCC National Focal Point; Head of Climate Change Coordination Unit, Ministry of Environment and the attendees run on how Tunisia is preparing for the implementation of international carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement in the context of the updated NDCs and long-term mitigation strategies. The Tunisian Focal Point generously elaborated on the national efforts being exerted to support Tunisia to commit to its NDCs, and the role of the Ministry of Environment in supporting the municipal serviceable role to local communities, where the two discussed, deliberated and shared information, good practices, and the challenges and opportunities specific to the municipalities in Tunisia to advance the development and implementation of ambitious NDCs and sectoral policies to support the achievement of Paris Agreement in alignment with green economy principles. The discussion extended to the adopted mechanisms to solve the waste management issues and how is it possible for the municipalities in Tunisia to take the front seat in offering integrated solutions to the indigenous people.

## CLOSING SESSION

The event sessions were closed by Ms. Rula Al-Shaweesh, MINARET Project Manager at RSS/NERC. The closing statement highlighted that Climate Change remains a challenge in the Arab region especially at the municipal level given the lack of clear policies and institutional frameworks that empower them in light of the decentralization being initiated by a number of countries. This should be addressed by governments and policy makers to partner with international organizations to advocate and develop policies that will enable and empower municipalities to better access finance and implement WEF projects. This makes networking and partnering with local, national, and international organizations and potential donors ever more important for municipalities. On the other hand, the Arab region is endowed with the potential of RE which should constitute an enabler to accelerate their uptake and use of these RE technologies across different sectors within the nexus approach. More needs to be done in terms of awareness raising and capacity building so that more people and decisions makers are aware of the embedded benefits. Finally, Ms. Al-Shaweesh thanked all the participants for their active engagement and emphasized the event's engaging wealth of information and discussions, the importance and effectiveness of practical working groups that incorporate real-life scenarios, and the intention to continue coordinating and collaborating with the represented stakeholders.



## AGENDA (DAY 1)

Tuesday, 28 June 2022	
08:15 – 09:00	Registration
Opening Session	
9:00 - 9:45	<p><b>Opening Speeches</b></p> <p><b>Eng. Walid Shahin</b>, <i>Director National Energy Research Center, Royal Scientific Society, Jordan</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Salim Ben Amara</b>, <i>Mayor of Manouba Municipality, Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Basma Matouq</b>, <i>President La Fédération Nationale des Communes Tunisiennes /Mayor of Raoued Municipality, Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Irene Sander</b>, <i>Regional Coordinator for the Nexus Regional Dialogues Programme, GIZ</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Quentin Peignaux</b>, <i>Attaché EU Delegation in Tunisia</i></p>
9:45 - 10:15	<p>Visual Presentation - <b>MINARET in a Nutshell: (Aims/Challenges) + (BEI Inputs)</b></p> <p><b>Ms. Rula Al-Shaweesh</b>, <i>MINARET Project Manager, Royal Scientific Society</i></p> <p><b>Eng. Taher Dallou</b>, <i>Energy Specialist, Royal Scientific Society</i></p>
-	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>
Session I	<b>Opportunities and challenges of municipalities in natural resources management</b>
10:30 – 11:30	<p><b>Visual Presentation</b> on Integrated Resources Management for Sustainable Municipalities</p> <p>By <b>Khaled Bedoui</b>, <i>Climate Change Expert, Tunisia</i></p> <p>Discussion session:</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Kawther Lihidheb</b>, <i>International Expert (ECONOLER), Tunisia</i></p> <p>Rapporteur: <b>Mr. Taher Dallou</b>, <i>Energy Specialist, RSS</i></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><b>Eng Alaaeddin Tayyash</b>, <i>National Company for Exploitation and Water Distribution</i></p> <p><b>Eng. Abdel Hamid Qannouni</b>, <i>Director of RE Unit, The National Agency for Energy Management (ANME)</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Wa'd Bou Zeidi</b>, <i>On behalf of Mayor, Rouad Municipality, Tunis</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Selim Ben Amara</b>, <i>The Mayor, Manouba Municipality, Tunis</i></p> <p><b>Key areas of discussion:</b></p>

	<p>What are the most key challenges/barriers related to energy, water and food sectors faced at the level of Raoued and Manouba municipalities that were touched through BEI data collection process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the projects that the municipality aim to have in order to reduce CO2 emissions and solve wastewater problems, especially Ariana Sabkha issue?</li> <li>- What are the most important problems facing municipalities in the field of climate change and natural resources management (water, energy, food), whether at the environmental projects at municipal level or at the level of laws adopted by the Tunisian government?</li> <li>- How could the SECAP as climate change tool help the municipalities to develop WEF nexus solutions to combat the challenges that most affect these sectors, especially the energy sector?</li> </ul> <p><b>Voices from the public -Q and A</b></p>
<b>Session II</b>	<b>Nexus Governance Setting – Mainstreaming Nexus approach at municipal level</b>
11:35 - 13:00	<p><b>Visual Presentation</b> on Municipal Governance through Nexus Lens</p> <p>By <b>Hadi Chbili</b>, <i>Director General of Environment and Quality of Life, Ministry of Environment, Tunisia</i></p> <p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Mr. Hadi Chbili</b>, <i>Director General of Environment and Quality of Life, Ministry of Environment, Tunisia</i></p> <p>Rapporteur: <b>Mr. Taher Dallou, Energy Specialist, RSS</b></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><b>Ms. Hajar Al Gharbi</b>, <i>Wastewater Expert, National Sanitation Utility (ONAS), Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Kawther Lihidheb</b>, <i>Energy Efficiency International Consulting Services (ECONOLER), Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Eng Zakariyya Khazari</b>, <i>District Manager of the Tunisian Company of Electricity and Gas (STEG), (Manouba) Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Eng. Fathi Derouez</b>, <i>Manouba Municipality, Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Eng. Elham Sallemi</b>, <i>Rouad Municipality, Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Key areas of discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To what extent the municipal laws in Tunisia allow for municipalities' involvement and level of authority in the development process in terms of financial control, the management and governance over resources and the level of empowerment and facilitations measures they provide to the community?</li> <li>- In your opinion, what is the sector that has the most potential to reduce CO2 emissions at Raoued and Manouba municipal level? (Transportation, electricity, gas, solid waste, and wastewater)?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do the governing scene do in dealing with the complexity among the water, energy and food sectors at the municipal level? and what can be done to enhance the role of municipalities to become the agent in the sustainable development?</li> <li>- How can we model the “NEXUS” at municipal level?</li> </ul> <p><b>Voices from the public -Q and A</b></p>
-	<b>BREAK</b>
<b>Session III</b>	<b>Local Efforts Through Climate Policy</b>
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	<p><i>Visual Presentation</i> on The Role of Municipalities as in NDCs</p> <p><b>Hamda Al Alawi</b>, <i>Director of Adaptation, Ministry of Environment, Tunisia</i></p> <p><b>Interactive Discussion</b></p> <p><b>Voices from the public -Q and A</b></p>
<b>14:00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>

## AGENDA (DAY 2)









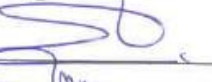

Wednesday, 29 June 2022	
08:15 – 09:00	Registration
Session I	Creating economic value through a circular economy approach
09:00 – 10:00	<p>Audio Visual Presentation on Circular Economy Best Practices by <b>Dr. Taib Ben Milad</b>, Founder of Environmental Project for Sustainable Development, Tunisia</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Dr Taib Ben Milad</b>, <i>Founder of Environmental Project for Sustainable Development, Tunisia</i></p> <p>Rapporteur: <b>Mr. Taher Dallou</b>, <i>Energy Specialist, RSS</i></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Eng. Mohammed Zemrli</b>, <i>National Focal Point, National Coordination Unit for Climate Change, Tunisia</i></li> <li>- <b>Eng. Elham Sallemi</b>, <i>Raoued Municipality</i></li> <li>- <b>Ms. Fatima Zaghdan</b>, <i>Director National Agency for Waste Management – Tunisia</i></li> <li>- <b>Eng. Fathi Derouez</b>, <i>Manouba Municipality, Tunisia</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Key areas of discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the municipality doing to promote the conversion of waste into resources?</li> <li>- What are the enablers for knowledge-exchange among urban practitioners from city administrations, civil society, academia and the private sector?</li> <li>- How will the transition to a circular economy reduce costs and create jobs?</li> <li>- Will moving toward a circular economy require changes in community behavior?</li> </ul> <p><b>Voices from the public -Q and A</b></p>
10:00 – 12:30	Field Visit (On ground Best Practices)
13:00	LUNCH

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS












### Rooming List



High-Level Policy Dialogue Meeting 28-29 June, 2022

Tunis, Tunisia

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