

Joint Communiqué of United States-Oman Environmental Meetings

05 June 2014

United States-Oman meetings on implementation of the Environment Chapter of the Free Trade Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation

Muscat, Oman

On June 4, 2014, the United States and Oman held bilateral meetings to discuss implementation of their commitments under the Environment Chapter of the United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and environmental cooperation through the Joint Forum established under their bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation (MOU). On June 5, the two governments held a public session to discuss these matters with representatives of civil society and the private sector.

During the meetings on Environment Chapter implementation, the governments reported on their progress in meeting obligations in the Environment Chapter, including obligations to: (1) establish high levels of environmental protection; (2) effectively enforce environmental laws and regulations; and (3) provide opportunities for public participation with respect to implementation of the Environment Chapter.

The United States reported, among other things, on actions taken to improve levels of environmental protection, such as the establishment of six new wildlife refuges since 2012 and the revision of national ambient air quality standards for harmful fine particulate matter. The United States also reported that in fiscal year 2013, the U.S. Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division concluded 53 criminal cases against 87 defendants, obtaining sentences totaling nearly 65 years in confinement and over \$79 million in criminal fines, restitution, community service funds, and special assessments.

As part of U.S.-Omani environmental cooperation, Omani partners are working to adapt the U.S. Forest Service's Incident Command System (ICS), an environment disaster management technique, for coordinated disaster response in Oman. Oman also reported that it is in the final

stages of signing the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and is working toward compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

During the Joint Forum, the two governments finalized a 2014-2017 Plan of Action that establishes the following priorities for cooperative activities: (1) institutional and policy strengthening for effective implementation and enforcement of environmental laws; (2) environmental disaster preparedness; (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; (4) improving clean production processes, building resilience to climate change, and encouraging the adoption of sound environmental practices and technologies; and (5) promoting environmental education, transparency, and public participation in environmental decision-making and enforcement.

Technical experts from the governments highlighted achievements from ongoing cooperative activities. They also identified priorities for support and assistance needed to review and update Oman's Law on Protecting the Environment and Preventing Pollution, and its related regulations, in particular the Regulations on Controlling Air Pollutants Emitted by Stationary Sources.

Officials from the U.S. Forest Service and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman described their work together to implement ICS on a national level and their hope to work with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to assist with regional implementation of ICS. Officials from the U.S. Department of Interior and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman discussed how they are cooperating to improve protected areas and natural resource management.

During the public session, U. S. and Omani officials met with representatives from civil society and the private sector. The governments reported on the outcomes of their meetings, answered questions, and asked attendees for their views on implementation of the Environment Chapter and the MOU.