

Final Conference Statement

International Conference on Dust Storm in Southwestern Asia

In line with the 20-year national vision plan, and the government emphasis on combating dust storm through protecting and restoring natural resources, the conference of Dust Storm in Southwestern Asia was held 23-24 April, 2019, in University of Zabol, Iran. Participation of national and international researchers and experts in this conference has provided us an opportunity to take a key step in controlling and combating dust storm in South Western Asia by gathering latest research results and experiences in this regard. While acknowledging the measures taken, the following recommendations are offered to the government and the associated authorities:

- 1- Due to the transboundary nature of the dust phenomenon and the resulting crises, it is essential to establish a strong cooperation with governments and international organizations such as FAO, UNDP, GEF and UNESCO, led by a professional working group from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consulted by local universities and government agencies.
2. To enhance the academic and executive capacity of universities and research institutes of the countries involved in dust crisis, strengthening Science Diplomacy by increasing interactions in the form of joint specialized meetings and researcher's exchange, holding joint regional and international conferences, and conducting collaborative research projects are recommended.
- 3- In the development of the National Spatial Planning Document, it is necessary to consider a nationwide comprehensive program on tackling the dust storm in affected provinces.
4. Considering the necessity of developing Decision Support Systems and Early Warning Systems for dust storm events in affected areas, it is necessary to provide and develop the relevant equipment and infrastructure for smart spatial and temporal monitoring and preparation of required databases eventually.
5. The interaction of the "National Center for Combating Sand and Dust" with universities and research institutes in areas facing the dust storm phenomenon should be increased to prevent overlaps and integrate the researches results for pacing faster toward combating the dust storms impacts.
6. To reduce the detrimental impacts of dust storm in affected areas, it is recommended that healthcare, environmental sanitation, and public awareness be improved and developed by authorities being supervised under provincial government directorate.

7. For ecological restoration of Hamoon International Wetlands and to prevent the dust storms occurrence, NGOs and public awareness and participation should be prioritized by related administrations and executive organizations.
8. The researches presented in this conference unanimously affirm the close relationship between the restoration of Hamoon's International Wetlands and the prevention of dust storms. Therefore, a flexible management plan for restoration of Hamoon Wetlands based on each year's available water should be contemplated.
9. Considering recent floods in Sistan region and subsequent sedimentation in sources of dust disposal areas, the optimal use of available water bodies for increasing the vegetation cover and the soil moisture in Hamoon International Wetlands should be considered.
10. Referring to the research findings presented in this conference and the study of soil and water characteristics in Hirmand basin and Hamoon International Wetlands, provision of water through Farah River for restoration of Baringak Hamoon vegetation (the dominant source of dust) should be negotiated with Afghanistan officials.
11. To benefit from the capacity of universities in countries affected by Hamoon-originated dust storms, a working group inclusive of university chancellors and experts from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Oman should be organized for close and direct collaborations and the results will be reflected in synergy with target governments to deal with the dust incident in the West Asia region.
12. To operationalize the results of the working group in paragraph 11, a national team inclusive of regional universities, Department of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad, Ministry of Energy, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be organized.
13. To centralize and improve the science findings on dealing with dust phenomenon, the "International Conference on Dust Storm in Southwestern Asia" is proposed to be held continuously by establishing a permanent secretariat at University of Zabol.

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