**United Nations Framework on Climate Change: COP 22**

**Kuwait**

**Introduction**

The State of Kuwait is a relatively small country situated on the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, in Asia. We share our borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait has a surface area of 17,820 km2, and an estimated population of 4 348 395. Despite us being small in population and size, we have the fifth highest GDP per capita in the world, at roughly $71 318 USD. Our oil reserves, which are estimated to be the sixth largest in the world are the main driving factor in our economy, which is based almost entirely on petrochemicals.

Kuwait is governed by a semi-democratic political system consisting of an elected parliament and an appointed government. The Emir, who is a monarch ruler similar to a king, choses the Prime Minister to lead the government. The Prime Minister can then select 16 people to be on his cabinet, with at least one of the cabinet ministers having to be an elected MP. The 50 MPs that form the elected government have the power to vote for the removal of the Emir, as well as the Prime Minister and his cabinet. Women have the ability to vote, as well as hold the position of MP. Our government system is the most democratic and fair in the Arab world.

Kuwait is a long-standing member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), an economic, political, and military union comprised of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. As a member of the GCC and similarly to the majority of countries in the region, our country’s citizens are virtually all Muslim (approx. 99%), with non-Kuwait residents being 64% Muslim. Since our population is 30% Kuwaiti citizens and 70% non-Kuwait residents, approximately 75% of our total population is Muslim. The predominant Muslim denomination in Kuwait is Sunni, while most other GCC states are Shi’a. Our countries have some of the largest oil reserves in the world, and are the largest oil producers in the world. Kuwait, as well as our GCC allies, are therefore a major influence on climate change, as we supply the world with a large amount of its fossil fuels.

**Topic 1: The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health**

Climate change has, and will continue to have a profound effect on the health of our citizens. As a wealthy country, Kuwait has a modern and effective healthcare system. Our government spends 3% of its GDP, or approximately $3 313 650 000 USD annually on our healthcare system, which is a hybrid of public and private healthcare. Kuwaiti citizens are able provided free healthcare by the government, but can purchase private healthcare plans for extended healthcare coverage if they chose. Since an estimated 70% of the population of Kuwait are not citizens, they are able to purchase health coverage from our country’s insurance providers.

Our country has almost no natural fresh water, and consequently we must rely almost entirely on desalinated water for our fresh water needs. The increase in world temperature as a result of climate change has disproportionally affected Kuwait, as we have received an increase in temperature of approximately 1.5 to 2.0 degrees since 1975. This has lead to drought as well as land degradation and desertification of our land. The rise in world sea levels also increases the risk of floods in our country, as well as contamination of our small amount of underground freshwater.

The desertification and degradation of land puts a severe strain on our country’s agricultural system, as we have very little arable land to begin with. The loss of any of our farmland forces us to import more food, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. The reduction of farmland also increases the likelihood famine if we are unable to import amount of food required by our country. Starvation could lead to the death of hundreds of thousands of our people, and have serious medical ramifications as well. Desertification has also lead to an increase in dust storms, which can cause severe medical problems such as an increase in asthma attacks and cause damage to the lungs and respiratory system of those caught in a dust storm.

Increase in sea levels pose a serious threat to our country, perhaps worse than that of our land degradation. If sea levels continue to rise, our coastal cites such as Al-Khiran, as well as our islands are at a severe risk of flooding and potential disappearance under the ocean. This also threatens our water desalination plants which are located near the coasts, and could therefore reduce our water production, causing drought throughout the country. A large-scale drought would be the source of vast health problems for our population, including dehydration, as well as an increase in the amount of water-borne diseases infections caused by the consumption of untreated water. Additionally, a rise in sea levels poses a serious threat to our ports. If some of our ports are inoperable due to flooding, we would be forced to export oil at a slower rate, reducing our country’s income drastically, and consequently hindering our ability to aid our people in their time of need.

**Topic 2: Climate Refugees**

Kuwait has accepted less than 3 000 refugees over the last 5 years. This is mostly due to our firm stance that we want to help people that come to our country become self sufficient, and help to improve our society. It is for this reason that we are very accepting of migrant workers, and our more democratic and accepting communities allow migrant workers to be integrated with ease. As mentioned before, our government is very democratic and fair towards the people of our country, Kuwaiti citizens and non-citizens alike. Unlike other Arabic countries who systematically discriminate against foreigners based on their religion, we are much more forward thinking and welcoming of religious beliefs.

Kuwait has begun to develop a plan to protect our costal regions through the strengthening of our coastal information system. This entails the establishment of protection and emergency centers as well as forecasting equipment to better predict the arrival of higher sea levels, as well as the likelihood of surge tides and flooding of our coastal cities. Additional strategic planning will be created and put into place to help our country to adapt to rising sea levels. Finally, the creation of green-belt buffer zones, along with reducing the open desert land ratio from 75% to 51% will help to reduce the occurrence and severity of the dust storms which plague our country and the region.

**Topic 3: Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Green House Gas Emissions**

At the COP 21 Paris Climate Change Agreement, Kuwait committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the requirements set out during said agreement. Currently, 95% of all Green House Gas (GHG) emissions are a result of energy production for the state. We are ambitious to convert our current power production system, which is heavily reliant on fossil fuels (83.5% petroleum based, 16.5% natural gas). Kuwait hopes to convert to producing clean fuel for its power plants, which would significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We also hope to substitute some of our energy production with energy from renewable sources, such as solar thermal energy and wind energy, helping to further reduce the amount of GHG created to meet our energy requirements. We plan on further developing our agricultural sector to become more self sufficient, and less dependant on imports, as well as using more efficient means to cool our homes to reduce overall power usage. Finally, Kuwait is determined to begin to use more efficient and less power intensive processes, such as reverse osmosis systems for water desalination, as well as creating awareness campaigns and encouraging our country to ration water and electricity use.

Kuwait and our allies in the GCC will bear the brunt of the economic ramifications of climate change response, hindering our ability to reduce our GHG emissions. As Kuwait’s economy is based heavily upon the extraction, exportation and refining of petroleum and petrochemical products, we are at the mercy of the world markets and the fluctuations of the value of oil and oil based products. Kuwait will therefore require some financial and technological support over time to help implement our plans to reduce our GHG emissions.

To reduce GHG emissions, the countries of the world will begin to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels such as the petrochemical products that we produce. Despite this, Kuwait is very ambitious and willing to reduce our GHG emissions to help reduce the damage that is being done to our country and other countries in the world as a result of climate change.

**Conclusion:**

Climate change has had a vast and wide reaching effect on Kuwait, and every other nation of the world. Through drought, desertification, rising sea levels, loss of arable land, and dust storms, our people have experienced first hand the dangers of climate change to human health. It is for this reason that we are committed to working with the international community to fight climate change despite the effects it might have on our economies.

**Sources:**

Introduction:

* + "Public Authority for Civil Information". Government of Kuwait. 2015. https://www.paci.gov.kw/stat/default.aspx
  + Reporters Without Borders, World Report - Kuwait, 5 January 2010, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/4b7aa9aec.html [accessed 6 November 2016]

Topic 1:

* Climate Change Impacts in Kuwait. EcoMENA. 2015. http://www.ecomena.org/climate-change-kuwait/
* Country Cooperation Strategy for WHO and Kuwait 2012–2016. World Health Organization. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/113231/1/CCS\_Kuwait\_2014\_EN\_15234.pdf

Topic 2:

* Intended Nationally Determined Contributions for The State of Kuwait. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. http://www4.unfccc.int/Submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Kuwait/1/Kuwait\_INDCs\_English\_Version.pdf

Topic 3:

* Intended Nationally Determined Contributions for The State of Kuwait. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. http://www4.unfccc.int/Submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Kuwait/1/Kuwait\_INDCs\_English\_Version.pdf