



# Discord and Disruption

2019 Global Trends Report

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An Anthology of Briefing Notes by Graduate  
Fellows at the Balsillie School of International Affairs

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The Foreign Policy Research and Foresight Division at Global Affairs Canada is proud to support and be associated with the Graduate Fellowship Program/Young Thinkers on Global Trends Initiative. The challenges facing Canada today are unprecedented and truly global. Tackling those challenges require fresh ideas and engagement with new generations of thinkers, researchers, and activists to help create opportunities for a sustainable future. We would like to thank the students and professors of the Balsillie School of International Affairs for their time, effort and commitment throughout the year to make this initiative successful. The results of their work, which has been encapsulated in this anthology, will help inform the work of Global Affairs Canada as it relates to foreign policy, trade and international development.



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# Canada's Leadership Role in MENA

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## Issue

Canada's role in advancing international law to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Canada's efforts to implement the Paris Agreement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is potentially in jeopardy due to the increasing risks that climate change will have on this region in particular.

## Background

The three recommendations below help to address larger issues relating to biodiversity, water justice, and Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) within the MENA region. Canada has a strong reputation globally, but can improve its image by considering these recommendations as a way to meet the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Canada's continued effort in the fight against climate change and for social justice around the world will only be made clearer through the implementation of these recommendations, allowing Canada to have a more effective presence in the region.

## Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in MENA

Humans are likely contributing to, if not causing, the Earth's sixth mass extinction (a loss of at least 75 percent of species within a geologically short period of time). Current species extinction rates are 10 to 100 times higher than previous mass extinction events. Canada is no exception, with 23 percent of species ranked sensitive or at risk in Environment Canada's most recent wild species report (Environment and Climate Change Canada 2018).

The CBD is the most comprehensive international treaty that addresses the conservation of biodiversity. Especially through addendums like the Nagoya Protocol and the Aichi Targets, it recognizes the importance of law and good governance in achieving biodiversity conservation, as well as cooperation with Indigenous communities, where much of Earth's remaining biodiversity is found.

Canada was the first developed country to ratify the CBD in 1992 and is host to the CBD's Secretariat in Montreal. Canadian leadership is greatly respected in these areas, due especially to recent advances in federal law and policy, and diverse and innovative regulatory experiences across Canada's provinces and territories.

In November 2018, during the CBD's Conference of Parties, the CBD Secretariat convened a day-long special event on biodiversity law and governance in conjunction with the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, following on the success of the inaugural 2016 Biodiversity Law and Governance Day in Cancun. Co-hosts of this BLGD included a consortium of government, university, business and international organization partners. It brought together representatives from governments, academia, civil society and the private sector to exchange legal and institutional good practices in mainstreaming biodiversity into, and across, economic sectors. While Canada contributed to the inaugural 2016 event with expertise, it was not yet a core partner.

### *Water and Gender in MENA*

Water governance in MENA is a deeply complex issue as growing disparity in equitable access to water continues. With this region in particular, the problem is not due to

a lack of willingness through science or development, but rather of conflict. The MENA consists of six percent of the world's population, but less than two percent of its renewable water supply — “in fact, it is the world's driest region with 12 of the world's most water scarce countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Libya, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the UAE, and Yemen” (Ghanimah 2015). During a single day during 2012, women spend 16 million hours, collectively collecting water in this region—an issue that is only getting worse (Global Affairs Canada 2018). Women and girls are particularly at risk when it comes to threats on access to water (ibid.). Since Canada is largely perceived as an “honest broker,” there is significant room for Canada to assist local grassroots women's organizations for water equality.

As Canada is a leader in equitable water governance with the United States through multiple bilateral agreements, including shared governance over the Great Lakes, there are clear lessons to be learned where Canada can provide our expertise on water management by supporting the MENA region's efforts to reach equitable water governance.

### *CREWS in MENA*

MENA is a hotspot for the impacts of global climate change and is already the most water-stressed region of the world. As well as increasing aridity and higher maximum daily temperatures, ironically the region will also be impacted by more extreme rainfall and flooding events (Tabari & Willems 2018). The population of the region has increased rapidly in the past few decades, and has also become increasingly urbanized. Both of these trends will increase the impacts of intensified climate change-related events. The need for better short- and longer-term weather forecasting is evident.

The CREWS initiative was launched in 2015 in Paris as part of the UN Secretary-General's Initiative on Climate Resilience and it “aims to significantly increase the capacity for Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2015) in the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. Canada's Earth Sciences Sector has “successfully developed a strong reputation in many areas of the developing world,” (Natural Resources Canada 2015) a reputation that an active role in CREWS would serve to enhance.

Canada has committed USD\$10 million through the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), but has not taken a direct role in CREWS, as it currently only has observer status. Also, investments in the MENA are heavily underweighted within the CREWS portfolio. This provides the possibility for Canada to take a much more active role focused on the MENA region, while not challenging the French chairmanship.

## Recommendations

**As a signatory of the CBD and host of the secretariat, Canada should support the Biodiversity Law and Governance Day in Sharm El Sheikh on Saturday, November 17, 2018.** With Canada's 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, and with the recent federal budget's CAD\$1.3 billion commitment to biodiversity and species at risk, it is possible for Canada to contribute political and policy leadership as well as substantive funds. Engagement as a sponsor offers several important advantages, including:

- a dedicated seat on the Advisory Committee for the day, helping to decide on the shape of the forum, selecting the best proposals for themes and roundtables, and guiding development of the forum;
- the opportunity to keynote or chair the plenary meeting on the aspects of mainstreaming biodiversity that are most pressing for the country, profiling their country's initiatives; and
- a special session in which to share Canadian approaches and experiences in the thematic sessions and roundtables, as a dedicated and collaborative platform for co-generation of new knowledge on law and governance innovation to mainstream biodiversity

**Canada should use its technological expertise in water infrastructure and water remediation technologies to ensure the sustainable access to clean water, adequate sanitation and proper hygiene, and integrated water resource management to meet the challenges of gender-based imbalances.** Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) is an excellent opportunity for Canada to use its expertise in water governance to inform, through aid and support, the MENA on developing a strategy for equitable water governance, especially with respect to women. Canada will also be able to use the principles set out in the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands,

to implement not only SDG 6 on water, but also Canada's FIAP in the MENA. This convention encourages parties to achieve SDG 6 by reducing pollution, encouraging sustainable water use, implementing protective measures on water, and mobilizing international support on local, regional and national levels to create a framework to achieve SDG 5 (United Nations Environment Programme 2016). It also encourages regional cooperation efforts, which can prove useful for local grassroots women's organizations, to prevent adverse health or socioeconomic impacts from damage to transboundary rivers specifically local organizations serving remote communities in MENA (ibid.).

**Canada should also join the Helsinki Convention: Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and New York Convention: Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses.**

It is especially concerning that Canada is not party to these two conventions given its history with successful water management. Canada can share lessons learned through water governance, but also provide a unique perspective on the nexus between women and water that will help it to achieve its commitments to SDGs 5 and 6.

**Canada should take a leadership position in a MENA-focused part of CREWS, utilizing the \$10 million already provided through the WMO and an additional \$5 million invested directly into the CREWS trust fund.** This more active involvement in CREWS will further both SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and also SDG 5, as CREWS "recognizes that women's empowerment is fundamental for building resilience and that men and women access, process, interpret and respond to information and warnings in different ways" (Climate Risk & Early Warning Systems 2017). Canada, and the Canadian Earth Sciences Sector, will both improve their international reputation with respect to climate change action and extend their social, political, and economic network within the developing world, which will be extremely useful in developing new business opportunities and diplomatic initiatives. With the possibility of "abrupt" climate change, the ongoing collection of climatological and ecological time series, such as local rainfall and soil aridity measurements, could provide warnings of tipping points, which is an important objective. Canada can also help extend the CREWS initiative to utilize its implementations for such data gathering and aggregation, and for use in longer-range analysis and planning.

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