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**Report of the Second Session of the Arab High-Level Forum on
Sustainable Development to the High-level political forum on
sustainable development**

Summary

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), convened the Second Session of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD) during the period 5-7 May 2015 in Manama. The Forum was hosted by the Government of Bahrain under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The meeting brought together high-level government representatives concerned with sustainable development, from the economic, social, environment, technology, and planning sectors. Participants also comprised representatives of United Nations agencies, Arab development banks, the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies, civil society organizations, universities and research institutions, parliaments, media and the private sector.

The Forum supported regional preparations to the 2015 session of the High-Level Political Forum on

Sustainable Development, HLPF (New York, 26 June 2015 - 8 July 2015). Taking stock of the global processes leading to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Forum aimed at: 1) Exchanging perspectives on the status of sustainable development in the Arab region and main implementation challenges in the region; 2) Increasing knowledge on financing for sustainable development and other means of implementation including trade, technology and capacity-building; 3) Engaging participants in a dialogue on the future steps for SDG monitoring and evaluation and the institutional frameworks required for adequate planning, implementation, review and reporting at the national and regional levels.

The Forum resulted in the Bahrain Document, which summarizes key messages emanating from the discussions. The Bahrain Document and this full report of the Forum will be presented as the regional input to the HLPF.

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Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), convened the Second Session of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD) during the period 5-7 May 2015 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Manama. The Forum was hosted by the Government of Bahrain under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

2. The Forum supported regional preparations to the 2015 session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, HLPF (New York, 26 June 2015 - 8 July 2015). Taking stock of the global processes leading to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Forum aimed at:

(a) Exchanging perspectives on the status of sustainable development in the Arab region and main implementation challenges in the region;

(b) Increasing knowledge on financing for sustainable development and other means of implementation including trade, technology and capacity-building;

(c) Engaging participants in a dialogue on the future steps for SDG monitoring and evaluation and the institutional frameworks required for adequate planning, implementation, review and reporting at the national and regional levels.

3. Discussions were informed by the technical summary of the Arab Sustainable Development Report (prototype edition 2015), as well as a series of regional expert reports and issues briefs and a set of national assessments of sustainable development in selected Arab countries. All Forum documentation is available on the Forum webpage at:

<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=3572E>.

4. The meeting was organized in seven main sessions in addition to the opening and final closing sessions. The detailed agenda is included in Annex I. A series of eight side-events were also organized by UN agency members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in partnership with various regional organizations. They served to highlight sectoral issues mainstreamed in the SDGs as well as relevant implementation issues. A summary of the discussions that took place during these side events is included in Annex II.

5. The Forum was attended by around 360 participants including high-level government representatives from 18 Arab states. Participants also comprised representatives of UN agencies, LAS and its specialized agencies, Arab development banks, civil society organizations, universities and research institutions, parliaments, media and the private sector. The full list of participants is provided in Annex III.

6. The Forum resulted in the Bahrain Document, which includes key messages emanating from the Forum as detailed in Section I of this report. Section II summarizes the discussions that took place

during the plenary sessions, while Section III provides organizational information about the meeting. The list of documents and evaluation of the Forum are presented as annexes IV and V respectively.

I. KEY MESSAGES ... BAHRAIN DOCUMENT

7. The Bahrain Document was issued at the end of the Forum and was presented by Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Al Amer, President of the Central Informatics Organization, on behalf of the Government of the Bahrain. The Document provides recommendations to be adopted as part of a comprehensive and transformative approach to sustainable development that enables the region to implement the envisaged SDGs in accordance with its own priorities.

8. The 19 messages included in the Bahrain Document are the following:

(a) Emphasizing the voluntary, universal and holistic nature of the post-2015 development agenda in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility; as well as emphasizing the importance of an enabling global environment in supporting the efforts of Arab states to implement the SDGs, while according full respect to national sovereignty and the diversity of religious, ethical, cultural and social values, and all human rights, including the right to development, and promoting the principles of good governance.

(b) Recognizing that the eradication of poverty in all its forms is the greatest global challenge hindering the achievement of sustainable development, and noting that poverty rates have increased in

some Arab states, which requires the mobilization of all national, regional and international efforts to deal with poverty within the framework of the global partnership for sustainable development. One of the most important supporting elements in this regard is to advance a transformative, people-centered development approach that respects and takes account of national specificities and integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development.

(c) Reiterating that the Arab states are intent on ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab lands, working with the international community to achieve peace, security and inclusive sustainable development in the Arab region.

(d) Emphasizing the importance of stability for achieving sustainable development, given increasing levels of extremism, terrorism and conflict in the region, with the consequent deterioration in the humanitarian situation, forced displacement and the increase in numbers of refugees in the Arab region.

(e) Underscoring the need for the international community to shoulder its responsibility towards refugee hosting states, and provide the support needed to enable these states to sustain their development gains and provide support to the refugees. Indeed, the issue of refugees has become a major challenge to host countries, putting pressures on their natural resources and straining their budgets, therefore rendering them inadequate for achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions.

(f) Highlighting the need to expand participation of all societal groups in the development process in order to promote the social contract between citizen and state and enhance the participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the displaced, refugees and people in vulnerable situations, in an effort to promote social justice and sustainable development.

(g) Underscoring the essential role played by all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, in supporting government efforts and implementing sustainable development policies, within the context of promoting principles of transparency, accountability and community participation, and strengthening legislative structures to become conducive to community participation, all within a framework of respect for national sovereignty.

(h) Adopting sustainable development strategies that improve the performance of institutions and their active engagement in the development process, while giving priority to combating corruption, improving governance, and developing working mechanisms that are compatible with the SDGs.

(i) Promoting practices of efficient management of natural resources; thus enabling present and future generations to access these essential elements of sustainable development.

(j) Emphasizing the challenges facing the region with respect to water scarcity, agricultural land degradation and desertification, all of which pose a serious threat to development, as well as to food and water security; while underlining the importance of adopting sustainable consumption and production patterns, through the transfer and indigenization of appropriate green technologies, the

provision of adequate funding and capacity-building to achieve water, energy and food security, and building on the best practices and success stories in the Arab region.

(k) Underscoring the importance of harnessing technology for development, addressing the widening technological gap and the growing capacity-development needs with regard to implementation of sustainable development programmes in the Arab states; all of which requires formulating national scientific research and technology policies, improving the quality of education and building a knowledge society, raising levels of investment in research and development and innovation, promoting regional cooperation, supporting the establishment of an international mechanism for facilitating the development, transfer and diffusion of environmentally sound and clean technology to developing countries, and reconsidering the current forms of cooperation in technology transfer, indigenization and financing, including North-South partnerships.

(l) Maintaining efforts aimed at formulating and adopting macroeconomic policies designed for reducing unemployment, creating decent jobs for all, including young people, women, and immigrants, by enhancing efforts in matching educational skills to the requirements of labour markets, in addition to enhancing the flexibility of these markets' requirements in countries facing such problems, reforming employment services in the public sector, and encouraging the participation of women.

(m) Underlining the role of financial institutions and donors in integrating sustainable development principles in financial operations, as well as in adopting an integrated approach

involving various funding options, whether public or private, national or international, traditional or innovative; and raising national resource mobilization efficiency by addressing tax evasion, widening the tax base, reforming the subsidy system, and combating illegal capital flows; in addition to examining ways for promoting the mobilization of financial resources, including innovative financing, and supporting developing countries to ensure debt sustainability.

(n) Emphasizing the need to enhance Arab economic integration and adopt an approach that integrates development and trade policies, backed by effective institutions that incorporate coordination mechanisms and participatory processes; as well as underscoring the need for ensuring that free-trade agreements, including the Arab Customs Union, impact positively on the three dimensions of sustainable development; and underlining the importance of reforming the global trading system and ensuring effective participation by all Arab countries, particularly the least developed.

(o) Emphasizing the importance of formulating evidence-based sustainable development policies, which in turn, requires strengthening national statistical systems and their data collection capabilities, improving quality and transparency of information, and issuing regular reports on sustainable development indicators at both the international and the regional levels.

(p) The green economy is one of the means for achieving sustainable development and contributes to the diversification of economic activities and building Arab expertise in this field through international cooperation in technology transfer and financing.

(q) Taking note of the increased frequency of natural hazards, in particular desertification, and the exacerbation of their impact, which necessitate the development of early warning systems, the adoption of measures to manage risk and build resilience, and an integrated approach that achieves sustainability by avoiding exposure to new risks, minimizing current risks and working towards sustainable urban development.

(r) Emphasizing the Arab Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development and inviting Arab states to work towards establishing sustainable development institutional frameworks.

(s) Emphasizing the need to maintain support to the efforts of the Arab Group in New York to reflect Arab development priorities in the two intergovernmental negotiation tracks relating to financing for development and the post-2015 development agenda; in particular with regard to the Arab Group's view on the relationship between the two tracks and the need to agree on independent governmental arrangements for following up on international commitments relating to financing for development; as well as supporting the Arab Group's position regarding the need for the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda to address the functions and operating procedures of the High-Level Political Forum, notably its role in reviewing and following up on the implementation of the development agenda commitments.

II. SUMMARY OF PLENARY SESSIONS

A. OPENING SESSION

9. The opening session included statements by the Forum organizers. *H.E. Ms. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh*, Minister of Social Development, spoke on behalf of the Kingdom of Bahrain. She welcomed all participants to this important meeting, which she hoped will ensure that Arab priorities are reflected in the post-2015 agenda, building on previous efforts by the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers. Ms. Saleh highlighted the progress made by the Kingdom of Bahrain in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the prize awarded to His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, in acknowledgment of his achievements in the area of urban development, housing and the MDGs.

10. *Ms. Rima Khalaf*, Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, thanked His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, for the generous hosting of the event. She stressed that sustainable development is the only path to achieve strong economies, safe and stable societies and healthy environments. However, its achievement requires human and financial resources, effective institutions, equal citizenship, good governance and the respect of human rights for all. Ms. Khalaf noted that despite the progress achieved in the region, the occupation of Palestine persists and there are alarming trends that seriously threaten the achievement of sustainable development, notably: increases in armed sectarian conflicts, extremism and terrorism, refugees and forced migrants, youth unemployment and poverty. Long

years, important efforts and large financial resources are needed to rebuild what was destroyed and restore social cohesion. Arab and international solidarity are therefore needed, as well as a comprehensive plan to bring the region out of its current ordeals. Ms. Khalaf closed her statement by calling on participants to benefit from the Forum as an opportunity to develop a clear regional perspective that can be conveyed to the global process for the post-2015 agenda.

11. *H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Tuwaijri*, Assistant Secretary-General of Economic Affairs, LAS, stressed that the transition to the post-2015 agenda will require an integrated and coherent implementation approach as well as adequate means of implementation, pointing to the positive role that Arab integration can play in this regard. He noted that an effective institutional framework at the regional level is also required to address emerging challenges, and the AFSD is well-positioned to play an important role within this framework. He particularly referred to the resolution of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment related to the organization of this Forum and the preparation of an Arab sustainable development report. Mr. Al-Tuwaijri concluded with highlights of LAS efforts in preparation for the post-2015 agenda.

12. *Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw*, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, highlighted the unprecedented pace of change that the world and the Arab region are undergoing in terms of material abundance. This abundance has unfortunately come at the expense of the environment. He stressed on the urgent need for a more integrated way of doing business and for turning environmental challenges into economically sound options. Important enablers of the needed transformation are technology, data, and finance; and UNEP has launched initiatives to address all three. Mr. Thiaw pointed to the need for

both public and private funding to realize a low-carbon transition, stressing that the global financial system will need to be reshaped to fit the needs of sustainable development financing. He concluded with a call to the Arab region to benefit from its extraordinary resources and opportunities to meet the challenge and transition to an inclusive sustainable economy.

13. *Ms. Sima Bahous*, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, UNDP, noted that the post-2015 development agenda provides an opportunity to review previous shortcomings of the MDG framework. Ms. Bahous indicated that the new agenda promises to address three important shortcomings. The first relates to environmental sustainability and its linkage to socio-economic development. The second relates to data availability, noting that the Arab region is in dire need for disaggregated data to ensure that the most vulnerable are benefiting from development efforts. The third aspect relates to flexibility in adopting national targets that reflect domestic particularities. Ms. Bahous concluded with the need to focus development efforts to resolve the root causes of conflict in the Arab region, a mission that UNDP will attempt relentlessly to achieve.

B. SESSION 1: FROM MDGs TO SDGs: VOICES FROM THE ARAB REGION

14. *H.E. Ms. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh*, Minister of Social Development, Kingdom of Bahrain introduced this session and emphasized the need to establish the right to development and to self-determination, protect human dignity and achieve human security in the Arab region.

15. *Ms. Roula Majdalani*, Director of the Sustainable Development Policies Division at ESCWA gave some highlights of the status of sustainable development in the Arab region, stating that remarkable improvements have taken place over the past two decades. However, progress was unequally distributed within and between countries, and in some Arab countries, it was fragile and unsustainable. Protracted conflicts and occupation continue to prevent sustainable development in the Arab region, and several challenges persist, including: poverty and exacerbated inequality; low participation of women in the labor market; water and energy insecurity; and an alarming number of refugees and internally displaced people. The Arab region faces severe resource constraints and the financing gap was estimated by ESCWA to be in the order of \$85 billion for 2015-2016. The prototype edition of the Arab Sustainable Development Report promulgates that the region has two possible pathways: one is to maintain the same unsustainable development paradigm; the second involves a rethinking of the development paradigm to ensure human dignity and the rights of current and future generations.

16. *H.E. Mr. Marwan Muasher*, Vice president for studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace stressed on peace and stability as prerequisites for sustainable development in the Arab region. He noted that the relative stability enjoyed by some countries of the region was artificial and fragile, since true stability can only be achieved when people feel that they are partners in decision-making and that their needs are met. Mr. Muasher referred to three alarm bells that the region has missed: regional outlooks as presented in UN reports, Arab uprisings and rising extremist groups. He stressed on a number of needed transformations. The first involves a gradual shift away from a rentier economy into a more productive and diversified economy that creates employment and addresses

poverty. The second requires political reforms to go hand in hand with economic reforms, including the establishment of effective systems of checks and balances. A third change relates to the need to enhance societal participation in the formulation of development plans that address structural problems such as unemployment, budget deficits and public debt. Finally, Mr. Muasher pointed to the dire need to reform the education system which has so far generated a frustrated youth. Focus must be on issues of quality, while aiming to develop critical thinking and accountability values.

17. *Mr. Fateh Azzam*, Director, Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut, gave an intervention on the right to development and human dignity – a paradigm shift. He highlighted the linkage between peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, noting that development policies in the region have benefited narrow segments of society and marginalized others. Mr. Azzam proposed that a human rights-based approach – an approach that has received broad consensus internationally - offers a new paradigm for pursuing sustainable development in the Arab region and is the best guarantor of social harmony and political peace. Such an approach relies on four pillars: a) participation, inclusion and empowerment of all segments of society to develop, implement and evaluate development policies; b) respect of human rights standards for economic security and sustainable economic development, including the rights to work, health, housing and education; c) accountability of all development actors, notably governments, but also civil society; and d) focus on people in vulnerable situations, notably women, refugees, Internally Displace Persons (IDPs), stateless and migrant workers. Mr. Azzam concluded that it is now clear that peace in the Arab region cannot be achieved without development, human dignity and respect for human rights. This in turn requires a radical change to the relation between the

citizen and the state towards one of partnership, pluralism, participation, equality and respect for human rights.

Summary of discussions

18. The ensuing discussions raised the following points:

(a) A special reference was made to the occupation of Palestine, which is hindering the achievement of sustainable development. Indeed, Palestine lacks sovereignty over its natural resources and Israel continues to illegally appropriate water and land. Furthermore, Palestine does not control its electricity infrastructure or its national borders, and Palestinians are being forced to leave their lands and live in extreme poverty because of the separation barrier. It is important to document these grievances to allow Palestine to file a case to the International Criminal Court and request compensation.

(b) Participants emphasized the need to end occupation and conflicts, noting that the establishment of peace requires reconciliation and good will. It was also raised that the issue of occupation was not sufficiently emphasized within the SDGs proposal.

(c) Respect for human rights is important, as is the respect of Arab and Islamic religious, ethical, cultural and social values. There is a need to consider the cultural dimension under the SDGs.

(d) Accountability is foremost anchored at the national level, and needs to be institutionalized through national laws, regulations and institutions. The international community has an active role to play in combating corruption and illicit financial flows.

(e) The influx of Syrian refugees has been a major challenge affecting the economy of host countries (notably Jordan and Lebanon). Jordan estimated that \$3 billion are needed to satisfy the needs of displaced people. In addition, terrorism is a major challenge facing the Arab region, as it depletes the resources of Arab countries and their ability to pursue a sustainable future.

(f) Creating jobs for the unemployed youth is critical to achieving stability, as well as the promotion of citizenship, and the consideration of women rights.

(g) The inclusion of persons with disabilities in all areas of sustainable development should be a priority in the Arab region, notably in view of the rising percentage of disability associated with armed conflicts. A human rights-based approach to disability must be adopted according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which most Arab countries have ratified.

(h) A question was raised regarding the classification of countries in the Arab Sustainable Development Report, noting that it is based on both geography and level of economic development.

C. SESSION 2: GLOBAL PROCESSES LEADING TO THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

19. The second session of the Forum focused on the global processes leading to the post-2015 development agenda. The session was moderated by *H.E. Mr. Taher Al-Shakhshir*, Minister of Environment and Deputy Chairman of the Higher Committee for Sustainable Development of the

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, who stressed the importance of the Forum and pointed out to the global responsibility to protect the environment.

20. *Ms. Margareta Wahlström*, United Nations Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighted the present post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction that was adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Miyagi, Japan. The Sendai Framework recognizes disaster risk reduction as part of sustainable development. It also recognizes the need to improve governance for prevention, adaption and preparedness. Measures include building improved structures after disasters and planning for future disasters as well as recognizing climate change as a cause of disasters. The Framework covers natural disasters as well as biohazards, technological disasters and health disasters, including long on-set droughts and drylands. It advocates for the participation of civil society and the private sector and establishes measurable targets in line with the SDGs.

21. *Ms. Marion Barthélémy*, Chief of the Intergovernmental Support and Interagency Branch of the Division of Sustainable Development of the United Nations, reflected on the process leading up to the UN summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York. The vision behind the SDGs is to eradicate poverty, while balancing the three pillars of sustainable development. The SDGs address shortcomings of the MDGs through expanding the concept of development and aiming at improved governance and promoting peace (Goal 16), as well as by integrating targets on means of implementation in all the SDGs in addition to Goal 17. The post-2015 agenda is universal, and at the same time it allows each government to set its

own national targets. The outcomes expected from the summit are a political declaration, 17 SDGs with 169 targets, means of implementation, and a review framework. For a successful implementation of the SDGs, a strong outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development is needed.

22. *Mr. Ayman Shasly*, International Policies Consultant, Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, updated participants on the status of climate change negotiations, stressing on the importance of the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC (COP21) in establishing a binding international climate action agreement. He highlighted that the climate change discussion moved from emission mitigation commitments to Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) applicable to all countries. Mr. Shasly specified that INDCs should target adaptation, reflect national circumstances and capabilities and be defined at the project and activity level.

23. *Mr. Iyad Abumoghli*, Director and Regional Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA), noted that two key aspects differentiate the post-2015 agenda from previous development agendas, namely universality and integration. Universality reflects that the SDGs are applicable to all countries and all peoples, and that their implementation entails concerted global cooperation. Integration, on the other hand, is based on three principles, namely: a) Leave no one behind and provide a life of dignity for all, through environmentally sound practices and technologies; b) Achieve greater prosperity in an inclusive manner, within the capacity of the earth's life support system; and c) Increase natural, social and

economic capital to achieve greater resilience and secure future generations' livelihoods. Mr. Abumoghli gave concrete examples and cases from the Arab region of an integrated approach to sustainable development. He concluded with a call to the Arab countries to reform their institutions to become fit for purpose and provide incentives to the different sectors to come together.

24. *Mr. Roberto Bissio*, Executive Director of the Third World Institute stated that inequalities are the key aspect hampering the achievement of sustainable development. In many countries, despite economic growth, there has been little progress on social aspects, as evidenced by the basic capabilities index which grew by only 10% over the past two decades. Rich countries have special responsibilities to reduce inequalities, improve the sustainability of their consumption and production patterns and meet their commitments to means of implementation. Free and quality education, labor rights, fair tax policies and the right to social security are needed to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, effective monitoring and accountability are crucial for developed countries, donors and developing countries alike. Mr. Bissio called for a carefully balanced mechanism such as the Universal Periodic Review of human rights, where all countries are held accountable.

Summary of discussions

25. The ensuing discussions raised the following points:

(a) The 2014 emergency in Gaza was a man-made disaster. Destruction from war, occupation and conflict should also be considered by the disaster risk reduction framework and by SDG

indicators, since it hampers the achievement of sustainable development. Overall, the issue of human security is not sufficiently addressed in the Framework. While conflict and occupation were discussed at Sendai, it was not included in the framework; however it refers to man-made disasters and thus offers a possibility to address broader issues.

(b) Several Arab countries have made progress in promoting renewable energy (RE), with examples cited from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. However, the high cost of RE remains an issue.

(c) There is a need for an Arab regional mechanism for disaster prevention, as well as capacity-building to predict disasters and deal with their consequences, noting that the Sendai Framework encompasses capacity building at regional and national levels.

(d) The concept of human security has not been adequately addressed in the SDGs.

D. SESSION 3: MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION: FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB
REGION

26. The third session of the Forum was moderated by *H.E. Ms. Naglaa Al-Ahwani*, Minister of International Cooperation, Arab Republic of Egypt, who highlighted the importance of financing as there cannot be development without adequate resources.

27. *Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar El-Hacene*, Director of Economic Development and Integration at ESCWA pointed out to the immediate need to rebuild the capital stock lost due to crises in the region, while working towards achieving the SDGs by 2030. Globally, financing needs for sustainable

development are large and estimates suggest that up to US\$2.5 trillion are needed annually. Consequently, conventional methods of financing such as Official Development Assistance (ODA) are not enough. An integrated approach encompassing different financing options complemented by regional and international support is essential for the implementation of the SDGs in the horizon of 2030. The public sector needs to be more efficient in resource mobilization by tackling tax evasion and illicit capital flows. In addition, widening the tax base, subsidy reforms particularly in the energy sector, and enhancing trade can also contribute to domestic resource mobilization.

28. *Mr. Tamer Mustapha*, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations in New York, stressed on the importance of having a common Arab position on financing for development. The zero draft of the Addis Accord was reviewed by the participants at the meeting of the ESCWA Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development, held in Amman on 7 and 8 April 2015. Among a number of issues, participants called for reconsidering ODA separately from climate finance and humanitarian aid due to the special context of crisis witnessed in the region. Moreover, Mr. Mustapha reiterated the position of Arab negotiators in New York that the Addis Ababa conference is a track that deals with ‘financing for development’ and not ‘financing for sustainable development’. This is particularly important as the region is going through crises and fighting against persistent challenges of poverty, undernourishment and child stunting as well as several other development challenges. The untapped potential of innovative financing for sustainable development should be unlocked in the Arab region.

29. *Mr. Sherif Arif*, Senior Environment and Water Consultant, presented the elements of a strategic investment framework for green economy in the Arab Region that is being prepared by ESCWA. The framework focuses specifically on the energy sector given its importance as a natural non-renewable asset and its impact on health and carbon emissions. Mr. Arif explained the tradeoff that governments face between sustaining economic growth and creating jobs on one hand and reducing green house gas emissions on the other. He noted that specialized multilateral and bilateral financing institutions can manage such tradeoff and provide incentives to financing green investments. However, Arab countries have not benefited much from these financing streams. The Green Climate Fund has established an important readiness programme to provide technical assistance to countries and the region needs to benefit from it.

30. *Mr. Wafik Grais*, Expert Economist and Financial Adviser, presented green sukuk as Sharia compliant mechanisms for financing sustainable development that are asset based and combine features of equity and bonds. The distinctive feature of green sukuk is that they can attract the interest of a broad set of investors encompassing socially responsible and Sharia focused investors. In addition sukuk are a flexible financial instrument as their structure can be calibrated to a variety of needs depending on the project at hand. Sukuk are by now a mature market that has been effective for resource mobilization internationally and in the Arab region. Private financing is available in the region and beyond; however it is likely to need credit enhancement due to high risks in green investment markets. With well designed financing structures and credit enhancement schemes as developed elsewhere, green sukuk could offer an important alternative market for financing sustainable development in the Arab region.

31. *Mr. Steven Stone*, Chief of the Economy and Trade Branch at UNEP, explained that global economic success over the past decades has come at the expense of a growing ecological footprint. As a result, the world has crossed a number of planetary boundaries. This reflects a misalignment between markets and sustainability policies. The rules of the game must be changed in favor of projects that support sustainable development. Mr. Stone explained that new ways are also needed in defining success, which cannot be measured based on economic terms alone. On the positive side, new institutions are being created and existing institutions reformed to deliver sustainability and Arab countries must tap on them. Mr. Stone presented UNEP's Finance Initiative, which aims to shape the sustainable finance agenda and create capacity to embed environmental and social concerns in the financial sector.

Summary of discussions

32. The ensuing discussions raised the following points:

(a) As indicated in the concluding recommendations issued by Civil Society Organizations meeting at the Arab Regional Consultation on the Post-2015 Agenda, organized by the Arab NGO Network for Development (Beirut, 30 April 2015), there is need for a global responsibility to affect change. The present content of the zero draft outcome document of the Addis Ababa conference raises concerns for the region. In particular, the negotiation process should consider 'common but differentiated responsibility' in designing the financing mechanisms for a new global partnership.

(b) Participants stressed the importance of reforms to the international financial architecture. Negotiations of the Addis Ababa Accord need to be more inclusive and participatory, and Arab countries should have strong representation so that the decisions taken are reflective of the concerns of the Arab region.

(c) Since fiscal space for financing sustainable development is limited in most Arab countries, it will be crucial for developed countries to renew their commitment to the global partnership. Historically, the developed countries have fallen short of their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Income (GNI) to developing countries as ODA, as required within the framework of the MDGs. Developed countries should consider increasing their contribution of ODA from 0.7 percent of GNI to 1.0 percent.

E. SESSION 4A: MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION: TRADE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

33. The fourth session was held in two parallel tracks, covering trade and technology respectively. Session 4A discussed trade for sustainable development in the Arab region, and was moderated by *Mr. Mohammed Ahmad Al Amer*, President, Central Informatics Organization, Kingdom of Bahrain.

34. *Ms. Hilda Al-Hinai*, Deputy Permanent Representative of Oman to the World Trade Organization (WTO), explained the challenges that have prevented trade from achieving its development potential in the Arab region. Among the challenges, there is a clear lack of integration between trade policies and other economic policies in the Arab countries. Institutions are ineffective at handling issues related to intellectual property rights, standards and environmental regulations. Moreover, the lack of

coordination between national actors and inadequate human capacities have impeded the development of a strong and sound Arab position in WTO negotiations. Arab countries have not benefited adequately from aid for trade programmes and activities. Ms. Al-Hinai proposed a number of solutions, including support to SMEs and building the capacity of parliamentarians, academics, and the media in trade issues. She suggested the organization by ESCWA and LAS of an annual meeting to allow Arab delegations in Geneva to exchange views and develop a common understanding about trade negotiations.

35. *Mr. Mohammed Abdelssamad El-Hamraoui*, Chief of the Division of Relations with the Arab and Islamic World and the Countries of Africa and Asia, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Kingdom of Morocco, pointed out to the revival of the concept of regional integration as a way of facing economic challenges. The Arab experience in regional integration was mainly embodied in the establishment of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and efforts to create an Arab customs union and a joint Arab market. A review of trade statistics over the past few years reveals that inter-Arab trade exchanges have remained weak due to a number of factors, notably weak and similar economic structures in most Arab countries. Negotiations between Arab countries on the detailed rules of origin and free trade in services are still on-going and are facing tough times, while negotiations on the Arab Customs Union have been postponed until further notice. A similar fate awaits the planned Arab common market negotiations. As a result, Arab countries contribute today a very modest share of the volume of global trade of goods and services.

36. In contrast, *Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar El-Hacene*, Director of the Economic Development and Integration Division at ESCWA, expressed optimism regarding the perspectives of an Arab Customs Union. Such a Union, once established, would constitute the natural second step after the Arab Free Trade Area towards the desired Arab economic union. Mr. El-Hacene highlighted the need for technical studies that assess the impacts of the planned Arab Customs Union on the economies of Arab states. In particular, studies are needed that analyze the specificities of each Arab economy and examine its trade ties to other countries and regional and international groupings. A number of reports are being prepared by ESCWA to study the challenges and opportunities associated with the establishment of the Arab Customs Union and determine the needed macroeconomic and sectoral policies.

Summary of discussions

37. The ensuing discussions raised the following points:

(a) Arab countries need to assess and explore the potential of mutually beneficial intra-Arab trade and tap into it.

(b) There is an interest in further understanding the obstacles to trade liberalization in the Arab region and the way forward for economic integration through the Arab Customs Union.

(c) Deep and comprehensive free trade agreements between the EU and four Arab countries, namely Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt, provide a good example of the pressing capacity building needs in terms of economic analysis and assessments.

(d) The interlinkages between trade liberalization and investment attractiveness were highlighted, with the Moroccan experience in establishing free trade agreements with its European economic partners providing important lessons in this regard.

F. SESSION 4B: MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION: TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB
REGION

38. Session 4B discussed the role of technology as an important means of achieving sustainable development in the Arab region. It was moderated by *Mr. Mohammed Ali Al-Qaed*, Chief Executive Officer of the Kingdom of Bahrain's E-Government Authority.

39. *Mr. Haidar Fraihat*, Director of the Technology for Development Division at ESCWA, gave a presentation on mainstreaming technology in sustainable development in general and the SDGs in particular. Starting from a brief overview of the post-2015 process, Mr. Fraihat explained that the technology footprint in the new agenda differs significantly from previous development agendas, notably the MDGs. Indeed, the proposed SDGs include ten explicit technology/research-related targets under seven of the 17 goals. Examining these targets, three objectives can be deduced, namely: a) Promote the role of research, development and innovation, and the transfer of technology for improving productivity, diversification of economy and creation of new job opportunities; b) Use of technology as a mean for the implementation of the SDGs; and c) Improve the access to green technologies. Mr. Fraihat concluded with a set of recommendations and provided highlights of the role of ESCWA in the region in advancing technology.

40. *Mr. Odeh Al-Jayyousi*, Partner and Board Member, Sustainable Development Professionals Inc., spoke about the role of technology in development in the Arab region. He pinpointed the knowledge divide as a main contributor to inequalities between countries, noting that Arab countries have the potential to “leapfrog” and reach advanced levels. Science and innovation have a new role: to serve societal needs and national priorities, hence the need to open channels of dialogue between innovators, government and private sector. Mr. Al-Jayyousi highlighted the role of technology in the water-energy-food nexus, giving practical examples. Given the current gaps in the STI system in the Arab region, partnerships between research institutes and regional integration are paramount as well as reversing the brain drain.

41. *Mr. Khalil Hamdani*, Visiting Professor at Lahore School of Economics, addressed the topic of investments in technology. He noted that implementation of the SDGs will require significant investment, well beyond current levels, especially in the Arab region. This would not be possible unless new technologies are able to reach larger populations at lower cost, new business models are adopted to encourage private investments in social sectors, and partnerships are strengthened. The private sector has the funds but lacks opportunities; hence the need to create an enabling environment and a national innovation system that balances three important components: Policy, science and enterprise. Mr. Hamdani stressed on the different types of linkages that need to be fostered through investments in people and infrastructure, namely: foreign direct investment, linkages with technology partners, forward linkages with customers, participation in global supply chains and backward linkages with suppliers.

Summary of discussions

42. The ensuing discussions raised the following points:

(a) An Arab STI strategy is yet to be developed, and translated into joint projects in the Arab countries. Current hurdles include low human capacities, which are best addressed through intra-regional cooperation. Investments in R&D need to increase according to clear national R&D strategies. Information and communication technology (ICT) is yet to be harnessed to serve sustainable development through the right policies.

(b) In order to change from being consumers of technology to developers of technology, Arab countries need to redress their social values and embrace a path to modernity. In particular, the education system in the region simply exports successful students to outside the region in search of job opportunities to meet their potential, career development, dignity and self-esteem. There is a need to build and strengthen partnerships between universities and the private sector to create an enabling, demand driven, environment for innovation.

(c) The role of education cannot be overemphasized. Both the content and methods of learning need to be revisited to promote innovative thinking in students from a young age and throughout all educational levels. This is the only way to transform our societies into knowledge societies.

(d) More effort should be directed at empowering enterprises, particularly small and medium enterprises, towards the development of homegrown technologies in partnership with regional and international partners and beneficiaries.

G. SESSION 5: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

43. Session five was moderated by *H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Adam Ibrahim*, State Minister of Welfare and Social Security of Sudan, who stated that sustainable development cannot be achieved without adequate institutional frameworks at the national and regional levels.

44. *Mr. Bader Malallah*, Director General of the Arab Planning Institute, made an intervention on institutional capacity development in the Arab region. He noted that the role of governments remains pivotal in the institutional framework for development; however, governments cannot act alone and they need to partner with the private sector and civil society. Referring to lessons learned from the experience of Kuwait and other Arab countries, Mr. Malallah stressed on the need for governments to downsize (i.e. step down from its role as major employer), develop national strategic frameworks for development, and undertake the economic reforms needed to stimulate investments and create jobs in the private sector. Furthermore, Mr. Malallah called for reforms of the Arab regional institutional framework for more effectiveness and to match global frameworks.

45. *Ms. Shahira Wahbi*, Chief, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, and *Mr. Tarek El-Nabulsi*, Counsellor and Director of Development and Social Policies Department at the

League of Arab States, presented the regional institutional framework on sustainable development. Mr. El-Nabulsi explained the institutional framework at LAS, including the Arab Summit, the Economic and Social Council and the Ministerial Councils. He gave a brief overview of the development progress achieved in the region, following which he summarized LAS efforts in preparing for the post-2015 development agenda. Key milestones in the process included the Arab conference on the implementation of the MDGs in December 2013 and the Arab MDG report, the 2013 Arab Summit and a series of meetings in 2014 to identify regional priorities for post-2015. Close collaboration with the Arab Group in New York was critical to ensure that Arab priorities are reflected.

46. Ms. Wahbi focused her intervention on the efforts to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development in the work of LAS. She notably made reference to the efforts by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) to update the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, launched in 2002, and develop it into an Arab Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development. Ms. Wahbi proposed to integrate the environment into the Arab Economic and Social Council, which is well-placed to become the review body for sustainable development and the post-2015 agenda at the regional level.

47. The Tunisian experience with national institutional frameworks on sustainable development was presented by *H.E. Mr. Mounir Majdoub*, Former Secretary of State for Sustainable Development in Tunisia. He pointed that although economic growth in Tunisia kept a steady pace of around 5%, and despite improvements in areas such as health, education, and access to drinking water, development

was not equitable and led to social disparities. Tunisia was also a pioneer in the Arab region in establishing a national sustainable development committee. However, this did not prevent a skew in development away from the social pillar. He concluded that the new Tunisian constitution developed after the revolution is rights-based, and includes principles of democracy, participation and decentralization, and a sustainable development authority was established to ensure the rights of future generations.

Summary of discussions

48. The ensuing discussions raised the following points:

(a) The post-2015 development agenda necessitates an effective institutional framework that is fit to implement such an integrated agenda. A shift from sectoral planning to multi-sectoral planning is needed as well as an integrated approach to implementation.

(b) Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be embedded within development planning systems that are participatory and pluralistic, while ensuring coordination with all stakeholders including civil society, private sector, and research institutions.

(c) A new sustainable development paradigm cannot be achieved without the prevalence of the principle of participatory democracy, which needs to be applied at all levels, including local, national and regional levels.

(d) Synergy between financial institutions and the policy-making process is important and can be enhanced through the involvement of regional development banks.

(e) Integration between the different directorates within each institution (ministry or other) need to be ensured.

(f) National sustainable development councils are important in bringing together the range of expertise which is needed for the formulation of legislations that promote sustainable development.

H. SESSION 6: MONITORING OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS IN THE ARAB REGION

49. Session six was moderated by *H.E. Ms. Ghada Waly*, Minister of Social Solidarity, Arab Republic of Egypt, and President of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs, League of Arab States. She highlighted the importance of building statistical capacities to enable the monitoring of sustainable development progress and the development of evidence-based policies in the Arab countries.

50. *Mr. Robert Smith*, Principal at Midsummer Analytics, presented the results of the review he prepared for ESCWA on the Arab experience with monitoring sustainable development. Only 40% of the MDGs could be monitored with available statistics, mainly due to considerable data gaps and difficulty in accessing data. He also identified a reliance on assistance from international organizations to collect data, whereas the region should focus on developing its own capacity to ensure long-term sustainability of data collection. Mr. Smith suggested a few recommendations: (a) The region should agree on a small set of regional indicators that each country can realistically

compile and maintain these indicators over time for comparability; (b) Sustainable development indicator reports should be published on a regular basis to ensure data transparency; (c) Governance for sustainable development needs to be strengthened through an assessment of strengths and weaknesses; (d) International assistance should be sought to support national capacity building.

51. *Mr. John Crowley*, Chief of Research Policy and Foresight at UNESCO, spoke about social indicators for the post-2015 development agenda, highlighting that monitoring is not a technical afterthought to the sustainable development process, but a core element of the process itself. The indicators represent a necessary and shared framework of accountability. However, the goals are much broader than what the indicators can measure and indicator data may not be available. Social processes today are data richer than in the past and this can be exploited in a useful way, moving from statistics to ‘societistics’ that put people at the center of statistics.

52. *Mr. Gerard Cunningham*, Head of the Partnerships in the Division of Early Warning and Assessment at UNEP, highlighted the multiple benefits of regular data collection and reporting processes. Data collection requires large resources, however if publically available it can be used for many different purposes and will inform decision-making at many levels. Collecting data to feed composite indicators that could serve more than one target and more than one goal will allow countries to cope with the large number of indicators. Mr. Cunningham presented several important global initiatives that have improved data availability, notably the Global Environment Outlook, UNEP Live, and Eye on Earth.

53. *Mr. Juraj Riecan*, Director of the Statistics Division at ESCWA, encouraged the countries in the region to create regional indicators and play a stronger role in the development of global indicators. Developing indicators as part of an integrated framework would ensure a conceptual approach rather than aggregation of data. The 46th session of the UN Statistical Commission which took place from 3 to 6 March 2015 in New York highlighted opportunities of bringing statistics and policy together. Mr. Riecan added that statistics cannot be reduced to monitoring or ranking countries; rather, their role is to advise policy-making. International and regional organizations are available to support in this process and establish a link between the national, regional and global levels.

54. *Ms. Nora Alamer*, Head of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Supreme Council for Environment, Kingdom of Bahrain, highlighted the adverse side-effects of global policies such as the UNFCCC that are not adapted to regional and national circumstances and development asymmetries. Ms. Alamer presented examples of social and economic impacts of addressing environmental problems and stressed the importance of ensuring that economies and societies in the region are not affected.

Summary of discussions

55. The ensuing discussions raised the following points:

(a) It is important to build national statistical capacity. Coordination between ministries and national statistical offices (NSOs) should be improved to establish a national statistical system that

comprises all partners. However, safety and security pose a challenge to the Arab region to continuously collect data.

(b) The role of civil society is important for data collection and assessment. However, concern was voiced about the role that NGOs can play in reporting data, since the UN only accepts reports and data gathered by the national authorities. Participants recommended that NGOs adhere to UN statistical principles.

(c) Countries are accountable to their citizens for reporting and there is a shared global framework of accountability from each member state to all member states.

(d) Indicators to assess the post-2015 development agenda should serve multiple purposes. An alternative set of indicators could be developed if data is not available or suitable. To be useful, this alternative indicator framework must be accepted internationally. Indicators should then be fed into an accessible data portal, specifically allocated for sustainable development indicator reporting.

(e) Regional partnerships are helpful, since they enable comparisons between national statistics regionally. A recent example is the development of a roadmap for the Gulf Statistics Council.

Annex I. Agenda

DAY 1: Tuesday 5 May 2015	
8:30 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 11:00	Opening Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>H.E. Ms. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Social Development, Kingdom of Bahrain</i> - <i>Ms. Rima Khalaf, Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia</i> - <i>H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Tuwaijri, Assistant Secretary-General of Economic Affairs, League of Arab States</i> - <i>Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme</i> - <i>Ms. Sima Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme</i>
11:00 – 12:20	Coffee break and networking
12.20 – 12.30	Presentation of the Forum Agenda
12:30 – 14:30	<u>Session 1: From MDGs to SDGs: Voices from the Arab region</u> <u>Moderator:</u> <i>H.E. Ms. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Social Development, Kingdom of Bahrain</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Status of sustainable development in the Arab Region <i>Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA</i> - Peace and stability in the Arab region as prerequisites for sustainable development – the cost of conflict <i>H.E. Mr. Marwan Muasher, Vice president for studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</i> - The right to development and human dignity – a paradigm shift <i>Mr. Fateh Azzam, Director, Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut</i> - Main discussants - <i>H.E. Ms. Adalah Attira, Head of the Environmental Protection Authority of the State of Palestine</i> - General discussion
14:30 – 15:30	Lunch
15:30 – 17:30	<u>Session 2: Global processes leading to the post-2015 development agenda</u> <u>Moderator:</u> <i>H.E. Mr. Taher Al-Shakhshir, Minister of Environment, and Deputy Chairman of Higher Committee for Sustainable Development, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new framework on disaster risk reduction 2015-2030 <i>Ms. Margareta Wahlström, United Nations Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction</i> - Sustainable Development Goals and the UN summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda <i>Ms. Marion Barthelemy, Chief, Intergovernmental Support and Interagency Branch, Division of Sustainable Development, United Nations</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate change negotiations and the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC <i>Mr. Ayman Shasly, International Policies Consultant, Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</i> - Integration and universality: key to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda <i>Mr. Iyad Abumoghli, Director and Regional Representative, United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA)</i> - The Post-2015 Development Agenda: An agenda for the rich? <i>Mr. Roberto Bissio, Executive Director, Third World Institute</i> - General discussion 		
17:30 – 19:00	Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs		
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">FAO/WFP/IFPRI and AOAD Side Event: Towards Achieving Food and Nutrition Security in the Arab World</td> <td style="width: 50%;">ESCWA/UNEP Side Event: The Arab Sustainable Development Report, Process and Way Forward</td> </tr> </table>	FAO/WFP/IFPRI and AOAD Side Event: Towards Achieving Food and Nutrition Security in the Arab World	ESCWA/UNEP Side Event: The Arab Sustainable Development Report, Process and Way Forward
FAO/WFP/IFPRI and AOAD Side Event: Towards Achieving Food and Nutrition Security in the Arab World	ESCWA/UNEP Side Event: The Arab Sustainable Development Report, Process and Way Forward		
19:00	Close of Day 1		
20:00	Dinner hosted by the Government of Bahrain		

DAY 2: Wednesday 6 May 2015

9:00 – 10:30	<p>Session 3: Means of implementation: Financing for sustainable development in the Arab region</p> <hr/> <p>Moderator: <i>H.E. Ms. Naglaa Al-Ahwani, Minister of International Cooperation, Arab Republic of Egypt</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcome document of the Arab preparatory meeting on financing for development <i>Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar El Hacene, Director, Economic Development and Integration Division, ESCWA</i> - Arab positions in the negotiation process on Financing for Development <i>Mr. Tamer Mostafa, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN- New York</i> - Main discussants - <i>Mr. Ayman Shasly, International Policies Consultant, Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</i>
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break and Bahrain MDG report launch
11:00 – 12:30	<p>Session 3 (Continued): Means of implementation: Financing for sustainable development in the Arab region</p> <hr/> <p>Moderator: <i>H.E. Ms. Naglaa Al-Ahwani, Minister of International Cooperation, Arab Republic of Egypt</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green financing: Readiness of the Arab countries <i>Mr. Sherif Arif, Senior Environment and Water Consultant</i> - The role of financial institutions in implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda <i>Mr. Steven Stone, Chief, Economy and Trade Branch, UNEP</i> - Green sukus <i>Mr. Wafik Grais, Expert Economist</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main discussants - <i>Mr. Oussama Safa, Chief, Participation and Social Justice Section, Social Development Division, ESCWA</i> - General discussion 	
12:30 – 14:00	Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs	
	ESCWA-AGU-SIDA Side Event: Water for Sustainable Development	UNEP Side Event: From Bahrain to Addis: Catalyzing Investment for a Greener and More Inclusive Economy
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch	
15:00 – 17:00 (parallel sessions)	Session 4A: Means of implementation: Trade for sustainable development in the Arab region	
	<p>Moderator: <i>Dr. Mohammed Ahmad Al Amer, President, Central Informatics Organization, Kingdom of Bahrain</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harnessing Trade for sustainability and closure of Doha development WTO negotiations Round, <i>Ms. Hilda Al-Hinai, Deputy Permanent Representative of Oman to the WTO</i> - Interregional Trade and Economic Integration <i>Mr. Mohammed Abdelssamad El-Hamraoui, Chief of the Division of Relations with the Arab and Islamic World and the Countries of Africa and Asia, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Kingdom of Morocco</i> - Arab Customs Union <i>Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar El Hacene, Director, Economic Development and Integration Division, ESCWA</i> - General discussion 	<p>Session 4B: Means of implementation: Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region</p> <p>Moderator: <i>Mr. Mohammed Ali Al-Qaed, Chief Executive Officer, The Kingdom of Bahrain E-Government Authority (EGA)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainstream Technology in Sustainable Development and SDGs <i>Mr. Haidar Fraihat, Director, Technology for Development Division, ESCWA</i> - Technology in Development <i>Mr. Odeh Al-Jayyousi, Partner and board member, Sustainable Development Professionals Inc.</i> - Investments in Technology <i>Mr. Khalil Hamdani, Visiting Professor, Lahore School of Economics</i> - Main discussants - <i>Mr. Yousef Nusseir, Expert on Technology and Sustainable Development</i> - <i>Mr. Abdulilah Dewachi, Expert on Technology and Sustainable Development</i> - <i>Mr. Mustafa Almahti, Associate Programme Officer, Arab Regional Office, International Telecommunication Union</i> - General discussion
17:00 – 18:30	Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs	
	ITU-ESCWA-LAS Side Event: Use of ICTs for Smart and Sustainable Development and Protection of the Environment	UNISDR Side Event: Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030: Towards Risk-Sensitive Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
18:30	Close of Day 2	

DAY 3: Thursday 7 May 2015	
9:00 – 11:30	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Session 5: Institutional framework for sustainable development in the Arab region</u></p> <p><u>Moderator:</u> <i>H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Adam Ibrahim, State Minister of Welfare and Social Security, Sudan</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional Capacity Development <i>Mr. Bader Malallah, Director General of the Arab Planning Institute, the State of Kuwait</i> - Regional institutional framework on sustainable development: Efforts of the League of Arab States in preparing for the sustainable development agenda <i>Ms. Shahira Wahbi, Chief, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, League of Arab States</i> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Mr. Tarek El-Nabulsi, Counsellor, Director of Development and Social Policies Department, Responsible of Coordination and Follow up Unit, Cabinet of Assistant Secretary General for Social Affairs, League of Arab States</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National institutional frameworks on sustainable development <i>H.E. Mr. Mounir Majdoub, Former Secretary of State for Sustainable Development, Tunisia</i> - Main discussants - <i>Ms. Barbara Adams, Global Policy Forum</i> - <i>Mr. Emadeldin Adly, General Coordinator, Arab network for Environment and Development (RAED)</i> - <i>Ms. Naima Gebril, Member of the Libyan National Dialogue Commission</i> - General discussion
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 14:00	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Session 6: Monitoring of sustainable development progress in the Arab region</u></p> <p><u>Moderator:</u> <i>H.E. Ms. Ghada Waly, Minister of Social Solidarity, Arab Republic of Egypt, and President of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs, League of Arab States</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring of sustainable development in the Arab region <i>Mr. Robert Smith, Principal, Midsummer Analytics</i> - Social indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda <i>Mr. John Crowley, Chief of Research Policy and Foresight, UNESCO</i> - Enhancing data delivery for the SDGs through regular assessment and reporting processes <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Mr. Gerard Cunningham, Head of Partnerships in the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Data Revolution" in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Mr. Juraj Riecan, Director, Statistics Division, ESCWA</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The social and economic adverse effects of climate change mitigation actions <i>Ms. Nora Alamer, Head of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Supreme Council for Environment, Kingdom of Bahrain</i> - Main discussants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>National Offices of Statistics: the State of Kuwait, the State of Palestine, and the Kingdom of Bahrain</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Ms. Mona Al-Daas, Assistant Under-Secretary, Statistical Affairs, Central Statistical Bureau of Kuwait</i> o <i>Mr. Maher Sbieh, Responsible for the SDGs, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics</i> o <i>Mr. Nabil Ben Shams, Director General, Administration for Statistics, Central Informatics Organization, Kingdom of Bahrain</i> - General discussion 		
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch		
15:00 – 16:00	<i>Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs</i>		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>UN-Habitat Side Event: Towards More Inclusive, Integrated, Resilient and Sustainable Cities in the Arab Region</td> <td>UNESCO Side Event: The Operationalization of Inclusiveness in the Post-2015 Development Agenda</td> </tr> </table>	UN-Habitat Side Event: Towards More Inclusive, Integrated, Resilient and Sustainable Cities in the Arab Region	UNESCO Side Event: The Operationalization of Inclusiveness in the Post-2015 Development Agenda
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16:00 – 18:00	<p><i>Closing Session: The Way forward</i></p> <hr/> <p><u>Moderator:</u> <i>Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key messages from the Forum: The Bahrain Document, presented by the Government of Bahrain - Closing remarks by ESCWA, UNEP and LAS 		
18:00	Close of the meeting		

Annex II. Summary of side events

Side event 1: Towards Achieving Food and Nutrition Security in the Arab World

The side event on food and nutrition security in the Arab world was jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD). The side-event discussed the level of food security in the region, opportunities and threats to achieving it.

Despite increases agricultural production in the Arab region in the past years, the gap between demand and supply in the region is widening due to increased population. The region is marked by unemployment and conflict, which prevents focus on farming, strongly affects markets, transportation and trade, and further exacerbates the fragility of the region. The region will continue to depend on food imports and due to price volatility the cost of food imports will remain high. However, there is great potential in some countries for increasing agricultural production and yields per unit of land and water, especially of fruit and vegetable. Greater regional cooperation and integration would allow these countries to export to countries in the region with lower agricultural production. This would allow countries in the Arab region to focus on their comparative advantages and otherwise rely on imports.

Participants mentioned that caution needs to be exercised when looking at regional statistics which can mask the reality, due to the large differences in the region. In order to create change, we need to face the reality to see how the individual countries are doing.

Increased food production cannot be equated with higher nutrition security. The Arab region is strongly marked by an increase in chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency at the same time as obesity. Studies show that relative to the national gross domestic product (GDP), child stunting is high in most countries of the region.

Policy reforms are needed at various levels. First of all, the different agricultural organisations should be working together and a roadmap for integrated efforts should be established. Organisations however do not substitute the role of the state, which is responsible for the agricultural production programme. The targeting of subsidies also needs careful revision.

Side event 2: The Arab Sustainable Development Report, Process and Way Forward

The side event was co-organized by ESCWA and UNEP to present the prototype edition of the Arab Sustainable Development Report (ASDR), including its preparation process, methodology, and key findings. In addition, the side event provided an opportunity to exchange lessons learned from the national sustainable development assessments in Arab countries, which were prepared as inputs to the ASDR.

During the discussion, participants suggested that the ASDR should highlight some of the positive developments in the region over the past years, including efforts to improve the institutional framework, diversify the economic structure, and increase share of renewable energy and intra-regional investments. The inclusion of success stories from the Arab countries was also recommended. Participants were keen to have a balanced report between the three pillars of sustainable development and suggested a wider analysis of the productive sectors in the region (notably industry and agriculture), as well as the role of the youth. Since the structure of the Global Sustainable Development Report and the SDG indicators are yet to be agreed upon by the member states, some participants suggested that this prototype edition of the ASDR be considered as an “exercise” and its structure revised in light of global outcomes.

Lessons learned from the national assessments were as follows. In Jordan, the report was an occasion to improve national dialogue on sustainable development and catalyze coordinated action between ministries. A key message is that the cost of addressing the impact of crisis (e.g. support to refugees) is much higher than the cost of

preventing crisis. In Lebanon, the absence of a national development plan with agreed goals was a challenge to the preparation of the assessment. Current efforts are being exerted by the Lebanese Council of Ministers to develop a national sustainable development strategy. In Tunisia, a key message is that the acceleration of growth needs to go hand in hand with ensuring inclusiveness and the participation of all stakeholders in the development process. Innovative ways are needed to address emerging challenges and overcome the entrenched resistance to change. In Morocco, a national development framework was built from the sectoral strategies through an integrated approach, and such effort cannot succeed without the political will to implement. In Sudan, the Vision 2030 was built on the MDGs, and the transition to SDGs can only be undertaken with the participation of all ministries and coordination with other concerned institutions. In Egypt, one of the observed pitfalls is that ministries are simply relabeling their plans to refer to sustainable development, while in reality they continue their business as usual. This needs to be avoided by ensuring a real transformation through the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development.

Side event 3: Water for Sustainable Development

The side event was co-organized by ESCWA, the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), to discuss regional water priorities of Arab States to achieve sustainable development.

The Arab Water Strategy is a general guideline that serves as a basis for the development of further national and regional strategies, such as the Unified Water Sector Strategy for the GCC countries 2015 – 2035. The latter strategy addresses issues such as transboundary water as well as wastewater treatment. Its main objective is to achieve water security in support of sustainable development and to promote joint Arab water management, as well as providing a joint statistical database on water rights and sustainability. A working group should be established at the regional level to develop an implementation plan to pursue the goals of the strategy.

Access to water impacted the achievement of all the MDGs. Marginal improvements in access to water were observed in the region overall, despite population growth and other challenges. However, 55 million people (15% of the population) in the Arab region still do not have access to improved water sources. In terms of sanitation, open defecation is still being practiced and 66 million people have no access to adequate sanitation services. SDGs now include a dedicated goal for water, but water is also present throughout the different goals and targets. Water is also referenced in the preamble of the SDGs.

The side event provided examples of problems that countries in the Arab region face in pursuing sustainable development and suggested priorities for solutions:

(a) The GCC depends strongly on desalination, requiring stable energy sources and financial resources. Despite the high costs of desalination, which are reducing the financial income of countries as well as having environmental adverse effects, governments have the responsibility to provide sufficient quantities of water to meet municipal needs.

(b) Gaza has limited access to the shared transboundary water resources. The aquifer is over-abstracted by four times its sustainable yield. The occupation seriously obstructs the achievement of sustainable development since Palestine has no sovereignty over its natural resources, notably water.

(c) Sweden, a major donor on water issues takes a regional approach to water management and aims to respond to regional needs for sustained support. In particular, Sweden funds policy processes that lead to a fair, just and equitable distribution of water resources.

Side event 4: From Bahrain to Addis: Catalyzing Investment for a Greener and More Inclusive Economy

The side event entitled “From Bahrain to Addis: Catalysing Investment for a Greener and more Inclusive Economy” was organized by UNEP and engaged participants in an interactive panel discussion with high-level speakers from UAE, Jordan, Palestine, UNEP, ESCWA and the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED).

The discussions revolved around the role of economic policy, finance and investment in driving sustainability forward in light of the Addis Ababa Conference in July 2015. High level speakers shared their green economy experiences, which are based on national priorities, resources and national development plans. Examples included the strategic vision of the UAE of transitioning towards a green economy through innovation and policy implementation, which will ensure environmental protection alongside continued economic growth. The UAE focuses on green transport, fuel efficiency standards and the importance of sustainable waste management practices. Jordan focuses strongly on green vehicles and improved public transport to reduce reliance on private cars. The country also works on transforming solid waste to energy and recycling. In Palestine progress on sustainable development is hampered by the occupation however the involvement from civil society is strong and donor support drives efforts towards sustainability. AFED laid out the regional priorities identified in their annual report on Green Economy in the Arab Region and emphasised that transitioning to a green economy is not an option but a necessity to achieve sustainable development.

Furthermore, the discussions centred on the need to move towards a “sustainable financial system”. Issues were raised regarding the need to raise the awareness, and build the capacity of investors and financial regulators on sustainability challenges and related economic opportunities. The power of local initiatives should indeed be emphasized, since financial markets have so far not delivered on investments to create sustainable development. In order to further attract sustainable development finance, subsidies that have detrimental effects on resource use need to be reformed.

Side event 5: Use of ICTs for Smart and Sustainable Development and Protection of the

Environment

The side event was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in cooperation with ESCWA to present ITU's Arab regional initiative on the use of telecommunications/ICTs for smart and sustainable development and protection of the environment. The side event aimed to inform participants about the key components of the initiative, challenges to be addressed and the proposed work plan to be delivered to meet expected results. The ITU other aim in organising this side event was to encourage governments, regional and international agencies to join partnership in this initiative. The initiative was presented by Arab countries to the Arab ITU office and focuses on five areas, namely electronic waste, water management, climate change, use of ICTs in emergency situations, and smart cities. Activities include the preparation of studies as well country support in the form of policy and regulatory frameworks and pilot projects.

Furthermore, the side event provided an opportunity to exchange ideas from practical experiences in the field. The high cost of transferring ICTs for smart and sustainable development was highlighted in the discussions as a main hurdle. It was noted that given the current political situation in the region, policy-makers may have shifted their priorities away from ICTs; however it should be stressed that ICTs are not a luxury but basic requirements for any country to achieve its national ambitions. There was stress on the need for regional cooperation in this field according to a regional framework that embodies individual initiatives such as the ITU's, noting that it is hard for an Arab country alone to embark on the needed transformation.

Side event 6: Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030: Towards Risk-Sensitive Sustainable Development in the Arab Region

The side event organized by UNISDR presented the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015-2030, which was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Miyagi, Japan. The framework applies to small-scale and large-scale risks, frequent and

infrequent, sudden and slow-onset disasters, caused by natural or man-made hazards as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks.

Globally, the number of people affected and the environmental degradation due to disasters has increased. In addition many countries in the Arab region face a refugee crisis. This exacerbates poverty and puts additional stress on natural resources. In the Arab region, more and more countries are providing necessary data for assessments of disaster risk, which are the basis for Disaster Risk Management. More attention is paid to DRR through global awareness campaigns, however DRR education needs to be adapted to national and local circumstances.

The Sendai Framework aims to achieve a tangible decrease of disaster risks, including on lives, health, and social, cultural and economic assets. A strategy for the Arab region is necessary to apply the new framework and to promote policies and actions to reduce disaster risk. To ensure implementation, a national mechanism concerned with disaster risk management should be established, that would proceed to coordinate at international level on behalf of the country. Regionally, an information network is important to act as an early warning system.

The Sendai Framework foresees a periodic review of progress as part of the United Nations follow-up processes for conferences and summits aligned with ECOSOC, including the High Level Political Forum and the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

Side event 7: Towards More Inclusive, Integrated, Resilient and Sustainable Cities in the Arab Region

The side event on more inclusive, integrated, resilient and sustainable cities in the Arab region was organized by UN-Habitat in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Arab Towns Organization, and the Arab Urban Development Institute.

The side event centred on the numerous pressures that cities face. To move towards a new urban agenda, urbanization needs to be integrated, inclusive and sustainable. The new urbanization model is universal and adaptable to different national circumstances, based on key urbanization challenges and opportunities shared by all countries. It must respect, protect and promote human rights. It must rely on equitable urban development and inclusive urban growth, which entails bringing equality and non-discrimination considerations, including gender equality, to the center of urban development. Implementation of the model must be integrated to address the inter linkages between the environmental, social and economic objectives of sustainable development, and the concerns of different levels of government. It must also enable the empowerment of civil society, thus expanding democratic participation and reinforcing collaboration. The agenda must encompass green cities and environmental sustainability, which involves establishing a critical connection between science, environment, economic growth, urban planning and governance. The key to achieve this move forward is innovation, learning and knowledge sharing, which entail the creation of supportive education, science, technology and innovation policies as well as development of capacities.

The last and most important element to move towards more inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities in the Arab region is a global data revolution to attain effective and results-based implementation and monitoring of the new urban agenda at the local, national and global levels. There are a number of enabling tools and reports which can facilitate this move such as the Cities Prosperity Index, the Arab Sustainable Development Report, the State of Arab Cities Report, and other national and regional reports.

Side event 8: The Operationalization of Inclusiveness in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The UNESCO side event on the operationalization of “inclusiveness” aimed at the clarification of the concepts, methods and institutional dynamics required to build inclusiveness into the post-2015 development agenda. This is of utmost importance since each of the six areas put forward by the UN Secretary-General in his Synthesis

Report either explicitly or implicitly refers to inclusion as an essential objective in pursuing sustainable development and an essential criterion in assessing actions and outcomes. UNESCO highlighted the areas in which it can contribute to national and regional policy development in the Arab region through its intergovernmental Management of Social Transformations programme (MOST). UNESCO's technical input will build on current steps towards the establishment of the MOST Inclusive Policy Lab, an initiative under development to refine concepts, clarify methodologies, establish knowledge management platforms and provide practical capacity building to member states to integrate the social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

The discussion focused on the need to interpret policy inclusiveness through a regional lens, with a view to supporting practical interventions that take into consideration the particularities of the Arab context. The ambiguities of the "inclusiveness" concept were explained and the analytical framework currently under development within the MOST programme was briefly outlined. Emphasis was put on the knowledge management processes and communities of practice to be established to ensure monitoring, the integration of multiple dimensions and the involvement of a highly diverse group of stakeholders.

The lack of participatory and inclusive processes in urban planning was highlighted through an analysis of space, ownership and inclusiveness of urban examples in selected Arab countries, with special focus on projects in Lebanon and Jordan.

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- 81- Zulaikha Ali Hammada

Annex IV. List of documents

Category	List
Arab Sustainable Development Report (Prototype Edition 2015)	
	1. Technical Summary
	2. Methodology of the Report
Expert Reports	
	1. Financing Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
	2. From Government to Governance: How Will the Arab Region Meet the Goals of Sustainable Development in the Post 2015 Period?
	3. The Institutional Framework of Sustainable Development in the Arab Region: Integrated Planning for the Post-2015
	4. The Social Pillar and the Paradox of Development in the Arab Region
	5. Role of Technology in Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
	6. Women's Rights and Gender Equality for Sustainable Development
	7. Measuring Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
	8. A Human Rights Approach to Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
RCM Issues Briefs	
	1. Economic Growth, Inequality and Poverty in the Arab Region
	2. Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture in the Arab Region
	3. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in the Arab Region
	4. Water and Sanitation in the Arab Region
	5. Energy in the Arab Region
	6. Employment and Decent Work in the Arab Region
	7. Industrialization and Innovation in the Arab Region
	8. Perspectives on Inequality Challenges in the Arab Region
	9. Making Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable in the Arab Region
	10. Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Arab Region
	11. Climate Change in the Arab Region
	12. Marine Resources in the Arab Region
	13. Terrestrial Ecosystems and Biodiversity in the Arab Region
	14. Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience and Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
	15. Strengthening Regional and Global Partnerships for Trade and Investment in the Arab Region
National Assessments	
	1. Jordan
	2. Lebanon

3. Morocco

4. Yemen

5. Tunisia

6. Sudan

Annex V. Evaluation of the Forum

An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Forum. A total of 53 participants responded to the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents rated the overall quality of the meeting as excellent or good (85%). The forum objectives were clear according to 82% of respondents and 73% found that the forum did 'good' or 'excellent' in successfully reaching the intended objectives. Participants lauded the facilitation of discussions as well as the quality of presentations and background documents, with over 87% of respondents rating all three categories as 'good' or 'excellent'. The forum presented a unique opportunity for networking and sharing of experience to most respondents.

Most respondents indicated a need to follow-up on the meeting to work on the integration of sustainable development in the Arab region and to create a regional vision. Some participants also suggested that follow-up efforts were needed to improve coordination at the national level, strengthen national statistical focal points, and establish a participatory framework for sustainable development review and follow-up. When asked about suggestions for improving future forums, respondents recommended discussing core topics in the main sessions of the forum rather than in side-events, ensuring a more comprehensive coverage of topics, and providing more space for the presentation of national success stories from the region. Participants also suggested expanding participation in the Forum further to include experts and financing institutions. Finally, participants expressed the wish to have more time to discuss the Bahrain Document.