

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL**

Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/EC.8/2021/12  
16 November 2021  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Executive Committee  
Eighth meeting  
Amman, 23-24 December 2021

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

**Proposed programme plan for 2023****Summary**

The present document sets out the proposed programme plan for 2023 of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). It is based on the format in which it will be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in the coming months. It does not provide information on resource requirements, because only the Secretary-General of the United Nations can issue such information in his proposed programme budget, which is reviewed by the relevant United Nations intergovernmental bodies before approval by the General Assembly. The present proposal may therefore undergo amendments during that review process.

The Executive Committee is invited to review the proposed programme plan for 2023 and make recommendations thereon.



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
Day month 2022

Original: English

## Seventy-seventh session

Items 140 and 141 of the preliminary list\*

### Proposed programme budget for 2023

#### Programme planning

## Proposed programme budget for 2023

### Part V

#### Regional cooperation for development

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\* A/76/50.

\*\* In keeping with paragraph 11 of resolution 72/266 A, the part consisting of the programme plan and programme performance information is submitted through the Committee for Programme and Coordination for the consideration of the General Assembly.

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## Foreword

In 2023, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) will mark its fiftieth anniversary of continued service to its member States and the peoples of the Arab region. Much has been achieved over the past five decades thanks to ESCWA's consistent commitment to enhancing national capacities, building consensus, and leveraging partnerships for development.

Nonetheless, despite these efforts, the Arab region is still short of achieving its ambition for dignified life for all its peoples. Conflicts, occupation, and serious social, economic, and environmental challenges jeopardise its advancing towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building on the many accomplishments and lessons learned since its foundation in 1973, ESCWA plans to intensify its support to member States as they strive to attain the goals set forth in their national development plans.

To this end, the Commission will continue to avail technical expertise and deploy innovative, technology-driven knowledge-production and dissemination tools in support of the development and implementation of effective policies and legislation. It will disseminate interactive, dynamic policy tools and use its convening power to facilitate dialogue and foster consensus, promote exchange of good practice, and forge partnerships for development; and will also continue to actively advocate for the needs and priorities of the Arab region.

ESCWA's ambitious programme of work for 2023, which I put forward with great confidence, is backed by the strong commitment to deliver on its mandate, guided by the core principle of "leaving no one behind" and the aspiration of the peoples of the Arab region for a dignified life, which can only be achieved through shared economic prosperity.

*(Signed)* Rola Dashti

Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

### **A. Proposed programme plan for 2023 and programme performance for 2021**

#### **Overall orientation**

##### **Mandates and background**

- 22.1 The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is responsible for promoting inclusive and sustainable development in the Arab region. The mandate derives from the priorities established in relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions, including Council resolution 1818 (LV) establishing the Commission and resolution 1985/69 amending its terms of reference to emphasize its social functions.
- 22.2 The Arab region holds all the human capital and resources vital for achieving shared prosperity and a dignified life for all its peoples. Yet, it faces significant challenges, some of which were further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, its progress towards the achievement of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains uneven. The existing momentum and commitment to ensuring equitable, post-pandemic socioeconomic

recovery, has broadened the window of opportunity to overcome setbacks and even accelerate progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda within the Arab region, and, where necessary, to protect the fragile development gains and build forward better. It is vital that this opportunity be leveraged to support member States and the peoples of the Arab region in realizing their ambition for a thriving future for all, including those most vulnerable. ESCWA remains committed and determined to contribute to these efforts.

### **Strategy and external factors for 2023**

- 22.3 In line with its mandate and to deliver on its commitment to member States, the programme will continue to leverage the expertise, experience and partnerships, built progressively over the past five decades, and to deploy multidisciplinary approaches in support of efforts towards fulfilling the ambitions of the Arab region's peoples. To this end, concerted efforts in support of member States' achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will remain at the core of the ESCWA strategy for 2023 and the Commission will focus on ensuring that any development gains achieved are protected and built upon as a foundation for cumulative progress towards the 2030 Agenda and for a sustainable, prosperous future for all. In doing so, it will also ensure that diverse and specific development needs of least developed, middle-income and conflict-affected countries are appropriately considered and addressed. ESCWA will contribute to the achievement of this overall objective by delivering on its three mandated functions.
- 22.4 Specifically, it will provide advisory services and technical expertise to its member States in relation to such key areas as natural resource and transboundary water management and sustainability under changing climate conditions; equitable and inclusive social development, with particular consideration of the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups (women, youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities), as part of the commitment to "leave no one behind;" equitable economic growth and prosperity supported by improved regional integration and opportunities for trade and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as innovative financing for development solutions; information technology and statistics; as well as governance, strengthening of public institutions, and assessment and mitigation of transboundary risks.
- 22.5 The Commission will also continue to analyse trends and generate and disseminate knowledge and data on topics listed in paragraph 22.4 and beyond. In particular it will invest in further development and refining of tools and platforms, such as Manara or the Arab Trade Gateway, with the aim of enabling government representatives, policymakers, experts and practitioners, as well as members of civil societies to exchange good practices and solutions in support of evidence-based decision making.
- 22.6 ESCWA will also leverage its convening power to serve as a regional forum for setting norms and building consensus at the subregional and regional levels, in particular to promote durable solutions for transboundary issues that impede member States' progress towards the 2030 Agenda. It will also promote South-South and triangular cooperation and act as an active advocate for the needs and priorities of the Arab region at the global level.
- 22.7 For 2023, the planned deliverables of ESCWA will support member States' ongoing management of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Such planned deliverables and activities include exchanges on experiences and good practices on sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the annual Arab Forum for Sustainable Development agenda (under subprogramme 5); building capacity of policymakers to utilize new data, statistics, technology

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and knowledge products, tools and techniques to inform policy decisions to deal with the medium- and long-term ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic (under subprogramme 4); and integrating social justice principles into public policies and programmes after COVID-19 (under subprogramme 2); among others.

- 22.8 Reflecting the importance of continuous improvement and responding to the needs of member States, ESCWA has mainstreamed lessons learned and best practices related to the adjustments to and adaptation of its programme owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes maintaining the hybrid mode of programme delivery where such approaches have proven to be effective, cost-efficient, and produced planned results. For example, participation at the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) increased from around 300 participants (pre-COVID-19, on-site attendance only) to more than 2000 participants once the hybrid (on-site and online) formula was introduced. Subprogramme 5 plans to maintain this approach with the aim to further broaden participation at the event, which will, in turn, enhance peer-to-peer exchanges, sharing of knowledge and good practice, and consensus-building. Furthermore, as was the case in 2021, the Commission will continue to integrate the pandemic-recovery perspective into planned interventions in all areas of its work (outlined in paragraph 22.4) where relevant.
- 22.9 With regard to cooperation with other entities at the global, regional, national and local levels, the Commission will further consolidate its historic strategic partnerships with the League of Arab States (LAS), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), among others.
- 22.10 Furthermore, ESCWA will continue its engagement with academic institutions and think tanks to promote dialogue, collaboration and knowledge sharing between the United Nations and academia in the Arab region and foster proactive and informed policymaking aligned with national ambitions for achieving the SDGs. ESCWA will continue to provide secretariat support to the Academic Network for Development Dialogue (ANDD) established by ESCWA and the University of Qatar and which as of 2021 included over 30 academic and research institutions from the region. It will also create further opportunities for partnerships and engagement to bridge the knowledge implementation gap and help member States gain access to innovation and financing.
- 22.11 With regard to inter-agency coordination and liaison, ESCWA will continue to play a lead role in the Arab region in implementing the Secretary-General's reform agenda, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/279. The Commission will maintain its existing approach to multi-stakeholder engagement and will take the lead on a number of global initiatives to improve the work of institutions in the region and of the United Nations globally. It will also contribute to the coordination and cooperation of operations, mechanisms and practices with other UN and non-UN bodies and networks as pertains to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, it will work closely with the United Nations Development Coordination Office and offices of the United Nations resident coordinators and through the regional collaborative platform in the Arab region to support common country assessments (CCAs) and to ensure greater complementarity and synergy of its own projects with those implemented by the UN country teams as part of the sustainable development cooperation frameworks.

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- 22.12 With regard to external factors, the overall plan for 2023 is based on the following planning assumptions:
- (a) The national development and political landscapes remain conducive for ESCWA to provide integrated policy advice, normative support and technical capacity-building in accordance with regional and national priorities;
  - (b) ESCWA partners and interlocutors remain committed to collaborating with the Commission and advancing joint initiatives and projects.
- 22.13 Where feasible, the programme plan for 2023 continues to incorporate novel approaches to implement mandates that were put in place in response to the changed operational conditions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the programme plan for 2023 assumes that those operational conditions have improved and allow for mandate implementation through formerly established approaches. Any modifications to planned deliverables would be in pursuance of the objectives, strategies and mandates and would be reported as part of the programme performance information.
- 22.14 ESCWA integrates a gendered perspective in its activities, deliverables and results. For example, subprogramme 3 plans to support member States in improving the business environment to increase female economic participation, in addition to the targeted activities led by subprogramme 2 that support member States in developing policies and legislation that tackle gender-related inequalities and enhance the capacity of national actors in the Arab region on gender justice, population and inclusive development. ESCWA also implements the accountability framework for gender equality in line with Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/16.
- 22.15 In line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Commission will continue to intensify its efforts to advance the inclusion of the needs of persons with disabilities in its programme, particularly under subprogramme 2 working towards more inclusive social protection systems in the Arab region. For example, it will continue to engage with government representatives through the established Inter-sessional Group of Experts on Disability (IGED) and foster policy discussions, peer-to-peer learning and cooperation. Special consideration will also be given to greater inclusion and empowerment of young people and the elderly in the socioeconomic development of the region, as evidenced by Result 1 of subprogramme 2.

### **Programme performance in 2021**

#### **Impact of COVID-19**

- 22.16 Although the continuation of the pandemic into 2021 did not have an impact on the implementation of mandates per se, its longer-than-expected effects did impact the planned results of the Commission. With respect to activities related to influencing policy, confidence- and consensus-building, and multilateral collaboration, online modes of programme delivery have proven less effective, or simply not viable. Nonetheless, the adaptive approach undertaken by the Commission resulted in redeployment of resources towards knowledge production and dissemination, as demonstrated by the higher-than-planned number of technical materials and seminars; and capacity building as demonstrated by the higher-than-planned number of field and technical cooperation projects and workshops.

22.17 In addition, in order to support member States on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, within the overall scope of the objectives, ESCWA continued to integrate pandemic-recovery perspectives into planned interventions across all relevant areas of its work. For example, the agenda of the AFSD was adjusted to enable member States to discuss and agree on a set of policy recommendations aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic (subprogramme 5); the published policy briefs on multidimensional poverty considered the compounding effects of the pandemic (subprogramme 2); a policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on the elderly was issued (subprogramme 4); the developed technical materials on enhancing measurement of human development incorporated approaches to assess direct consequences and root causes of shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic (subprogramme 6); and a capacity-building workshop on undertaking census under COVID-19 was held (subprogramme 4).

### **Evaluation activities**

22.18 A thematic evaluation of ESCWA's approaches to support and influence policymaking at the national and regional levels, completed in 2021, has guided the proposed programme plan for 2023. The study considered sequencing of the various components of such interventions, the minimum success criteria and good practice in addressing policy bottlenecks within specific contexts (four distinct scenarios). A clear methodology to assess the policy influence of ESCWA projects going forward was also developed. At the same time, the self-evaluation contributed evidence to the system-wide effort, led by the United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG), to strengthen the policy influence function of the Organisation.

22.19 Results and lessons of the evaluation referenced above have been taken into account for the proposed programme plan for 2023. Specifically, recommendations on the design of interventions in light of the existing conditions, enabled ESCWA to better tailor and target its planned interventions in terms of generation and dissemination of knowledge; and timing, frequency and means of engagement with stakeholders to achieve enhanced policy outcomes.

22.20 The following evaluations are planned for 2023:

- (a) Office of Internal Oversight Services evaluation of ESCWA Subprogramme 3 "shared economic prosperity;"
- (b) Thematic evaluation of one of ESCWA's areas of work.

### **Programme of work**

#### **Subprogramme 1**

#### **Climate change and natural resource sustainability**

**Objective:** to advance climate action and integrated and sustainable policies in the areas of water, energy and food security.

#### **Strategy**

22.21 To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will:

- (a) Strengthen the capacities of member States to build climate resilience by mainstreaming climate considerations in development planning and financing (Goals 13 and 17);

- (b) Strengthen institutions and provide technical assistance to facilitate access to science-based knowledge resources and leverage existing partnerships with other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, regional organizations, other international bodies and Governments to help member States make progress towards achieving various SDGs and their targets;
- (c) Find ways to reduce climate vulnerability through diverse partnerships under the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies for Goal 13;
- (d) Assess the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity, ecosystems and extreme climate events (water-related and sand and dust storms for Goals 2 & 15);
- (e) Ensure access to affordable, reliable and sustainable sources of energy contributing towards the fulfilment of Goal 7;
- (f) Promote innovative circular economy pathways in the Arab region for more efficient use of natural resources (Goal 12);
- (g) Promote integrated policy measures for adaptation and mitigation (Goal 13);
- (h) Provide a neutral platform for cross-sectoral dialogue; and advance the identification and adoption of sustainable solutions in the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, water-use efficiency, food security, food systems, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability (Goal 17);
- (i) Support the High-level Joint Technical Committee for Water and Agriculture in the implementation of the Cairo Declaration Action Plan and review and promote use of non-conventional water resources for the agriculture sector in Arab countries, as well as intergovernmental platforms focused on water, electricity and the environment (Goal 17);
- (j) Support integrated regional reporting and monitoring of the progress towards Goals 2, 6 and 7; and
- (k) Promote appropriate solutions for ensuring food security and contribute to Goal 6 by fostering integrated water resources management at all levels, through transboundary water cooperation and greater focus on groundwater resources.

22.22 The above-mentioned work by ESCWA is expected to result in:

- (a) Bolstered commitments of member States to climate action, designed to build the resilience of communities to achieve global and national development goals; and
- (b) Adoption by member States of policies, plans, harmonized tools, techniques and/or guidelines related to groundwater resource management, resilient food systems to ensure food security, sustainable energy transitions, and strengthened regional networks, knowledge hubs and coordination mechanisms.

### **Programme performance in 2021**

#### **Increased access to small-scale renewable energy technologies and applications for rural livelihoods**

22.23 Access to electricity in Arab rural areas stood at only 84 per cent in 2018 and renewable energy continues to account for the lowest share of the Arab region's energy mix. In this context, the Regional Initiative to Promote Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region (REGEND) aims to improve the livelihood, economic benefits, social



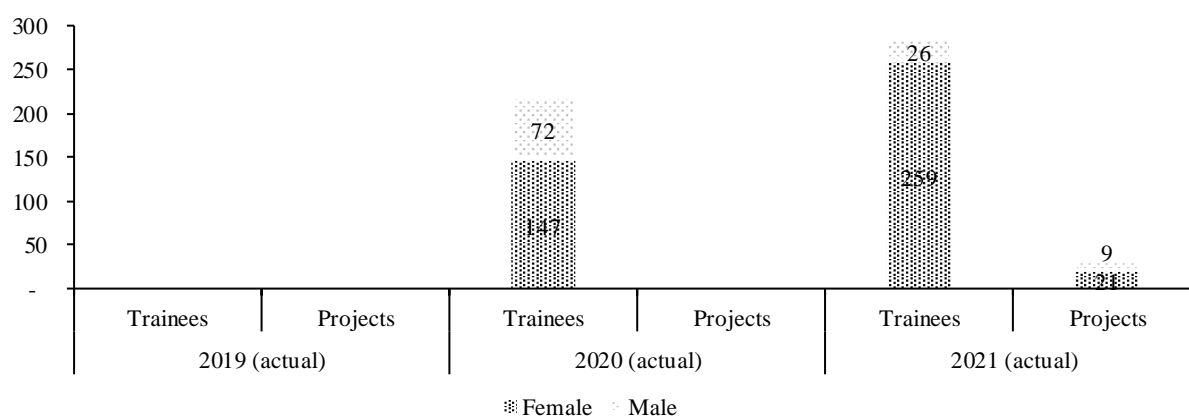
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inclusion and gender equality of Arab rural communities, particularly marginalized groups, by addressing energy poverty, water scarcity, vulnerability to climate change, and other natural resources challenges.

22.24 The subprogramme produced assessment reports which analysed the challenges and barriers to women employment and entrepreneurship in energy sectors in rural areas in Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia, and presented opportunities to reduce these, among other issues. The reports were developed into training materials to improve beneficiaries' skills for income-generating activities and enable them to transfer acquired knowledge to peers. The subprogramme also developed an integrated business model which strengthens the interconnection between technology, human capacity, women empowerment, social inclusion, entrepreneurial development and policy and institutional frameworks with the aim of supporting rural entrepreneurship in green sectors, particularly targeting women and youth. Field projects which provided small-scale renewable energy systems, such as solar photovoltaic pumping systems for farmers, and productive equipment to beneficiaries were then implemented. Finally, the subprogramme developed operational and policy toolkits on small-scale renewable energy technologies and applications to upscale the initiative at the regional level. Progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see figure 22.I)

Figure 22.I

**Performance measure: number of field projects by beneficiaries and number of trainees on use of renewable energy in productive sectors**



### Planned results for 2023

**Result 1: cross-sectoral policies for improved water and food security under changing climate conditions in the Arab region**

#### Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023

22.25 The work of the subprogramme contributed to 2 ministerial resolutions enhancing cross-sectoral coordination for improved water and food security in the Arab region being adopted by all Arab ministers responsible for agriculture and water resources, which met the planned target.

22.26 In addition, the work of the subprogramme contributed to 6 assessment reports being prepared by government officials in member States (Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine) using

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AquaCrop and RICCAR regional climate data, which exceeded the planned target of 2 additional assessment reports being prepared to inform policy on water resources management for more water efficient crop production. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.1).

Table 22.1

### Performance measure

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
1 resolution on coordination between the agriculture and water sectors adopted at a joint meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Water Resources on 4 April 2019 in Cairo, supported by the League of Arab States, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and ESCWA	-	2 ministerial resolutions enhancing cross-sectoral coordination for improved water and food security in the Arab region adopted by all Arab ministers responsible for agriculture and water resources	-	2 additional ministerial resolutions on coordination between the agriculture and water sectors are adopted
9 assessment reports prepared by government officials using AquaCrop and RICCAR regional climate data to inform policy for improved management of water resources and water efficient crop production	2 additional assessment reports prepared by government officials using AquaCrop and RICCAR regional climate data to inform policy on water resources management for more water efficient crop production	6 additional assessment reports prepared by government officials in member States (Jordan, Lebanon, and State of Palestine) using AquaCrop and RICCAR regional climate data	Participating member States benefit from technical guidance and exchange of best practices made available through the Arab regional network of AquaCrop practitioners	-

### Result 2: improved groundwater management in transboundary settings under the changing climate

#### Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023

22.27 The work of the subprogramme contributed to 2 member States (Iraq and Mauritania) joining transboundary water cooperation arrangements, which met the planned target of at least 2 member States recognize the importance of transboundary groundwater for securing their medium- to long-term freshwater needs.

22.28 In addition, the work of the subprogramme contributed to 4 member States (Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and State of Palestine) conducting assessments of climate change impact on their groundwater resources, which met the planned target. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.2).

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Table 22.2

### Performance measure

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
Pilot assessment of climate change impacts on a groundwater aquifer in Morocco	A diverse range of stakeholders benefited from webinars on groundwater-related topics, structured around shared priority concerns and addressing knowledge gaps	2 member States (Iraq and Mauritania) joined transboundary water cooperation arrangements	At least 5 member States recognize the importance of transboundary groundwater for securing their medium- to long-term freshwater needs	At least 2 member States develop arrangements to address transboundary groundwater challenges within the context of climate change
	Regional guidelines for improved groundwater abstraction and management vetted by at least 5 member States	4 member States (Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and State of Palestine) conducted an assessment of climate change impact on their groundwater resources	At least 10 member States acknowledge and benefit from the launch of a regional digital database on groundwater resources	At least 5 member States contribute data for the regional digital database on groundwater resources

### Result 3: increased usage of regional knowledge platforms for informed climate action

#### Proposed programme plan for 2023

22.29 In response to requests from regional stakeholders, the subprogramme generated climate-related scientific outputs, harmonized datasets, projections, and training materials and documents on successful practices to inform regional and national dialogues, strengthen regional cooperation and promote the development of climate initiatives that engage public institutions, policymakers, the private sector, and civil society in support of climate action in the Arab region.

#### *Lessons learned and planned change*

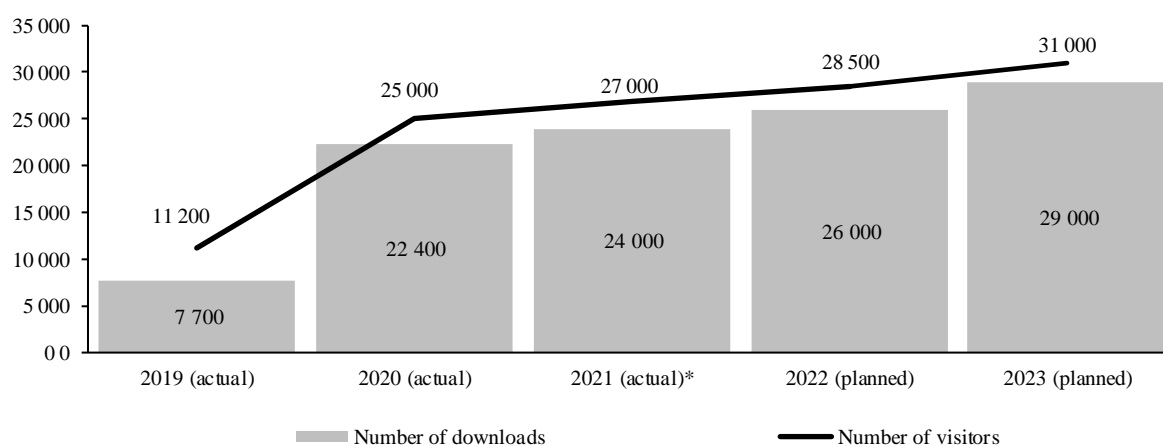
22.30 Based on consultations with beneficiaries, the lesson for the programme was that user-friendly communication tools are needed to facilitate the understanding and use of scientific data and technical information. Developing accessible platforms that are easy to navigate, and that enable downloading of documents and regularly updating information and data with newly generated knowledge material will ensure their wide dissemination, as well as the development of energy, water and food security policies based on climate assessments. In applying the lesson, the subprogramme will improve visuals of the knowledge products in existing regional knowledge platforms (RICCAR regional Knowledge Hub, REGEND website, AWARENET website, Groundwater datasets, etc.), continue to simplify the navigation to access and download pertinent information as well as implement a set of activities to generate new data such as the Mashreq Domain at 10 km<sup>2</sup> scale. Moreover, the subprogramme will develop training materials in both Arabic and English and document best practices to build technical capacities in the region and provide scientific tools to inform policy dialogue, enable national

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and regional priority-setting and reaching agreements on cooperative interventions. Expected progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (figure 22.II).

Figure 22.II

**Performance measure: annual number of visits to the regional knowledge platforms and number of downloads**



\* 2021 (actuals) are reflected as of 31 July 2021.

### Subprogramme 2 Gender justice, population and inclusive development

**Objective:** to achieve equitable and inclusive social development and reduce inequality, poverty and unemployment in line with the principle of leaving no one behind.

#### Strategy

22.31 To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will support member States in:

- Reaching consensus on social policy issues through facilitating policy dialogue capitalizing on the Commission's intergovernmental committees, subcommittees and technical working groups, such as the working groups on gender equality, social protection and disability inclusion;
- Developing national strategies on social development priorities, including social protection, poverty reduction, gender equality, the rights of elderly and persons with disabilities and mainstreaming the needs of other vulnerable groups in national policies to ensure no one is left behind through capacity-building and South-South cooperation in support of national legislative and policy reforms;
- Analysing national registry systems regarding their effectiveness and efficiency to integrate vulnerable groups in social protection systems and practices to underpin Governments' efforts to address inequalities;
- Mainstreaming social justice in policymaking and aligning government practices with international norms and global and regional frameworks that address inclusiveness in social

protection and urban development to counter poverty, gender-related inequalities, inequalities for migrants, persons with disabilities, youth and older persons (SDGs 1, 5, 10, 11, 16 and 17);

(e) Advancing gender justice, as part of their fulfilment of the commitments made in the Muscat Declaration: Towards the Achievement of Gender Justice in the Arab Region, of 2016, through its regional project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to monitor, analyse and support the reform of national legislation and policies;

(f) Rolling out the revised Arab Multidimensional Poverty Index together with the LAS, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to measure multi-dimensional poverty on the regional level and adapt it on the country levels; to ensure the adoption of targeted, effective and attainable policy measures;

(g) Reforming labour market policies based on an analytical understanding of market demands and changes occurring due to the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and

(h) Assessing the performance of select cities during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding their ability to mitigate the impact on vulnerable groups and developing urban recovery plans that enhance urban economic resilience to future shocks.

22.32 The above-mentioned work is expected to result in:

(a) More effective and efficient poverty alleviation strategies, inclusive and effective social protection systems and an informed exchange among public and private actors to create equitable and innovative labour markets that offer decent and productive work for all; and

(b) Increased capacity of member States to address structural inequality between social groups and enhance avenues for the participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups (women, young people, the elderly, persons with disabilities, migrants) in order to leave no one behind.

### **Programme performance in 2021**

#### **Improved legal and policy frameworks addressing gender-related inequality in the Arab region**

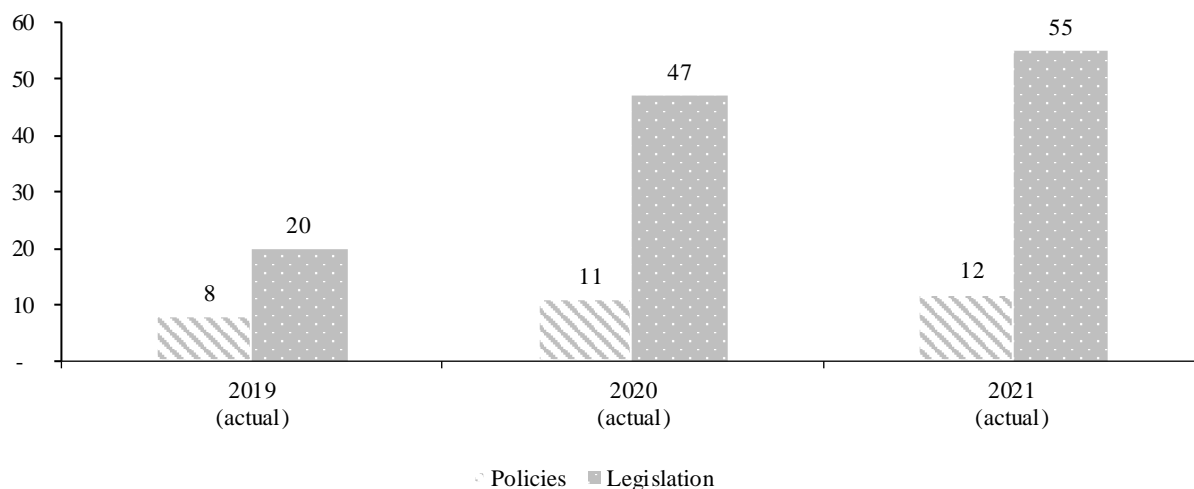
22.33 Since early 2020, the subprogramme in partnership with UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women regional offices worked closely with member States to examine gaps in legislation and policies by applying a set of criteria inspired by the SDG 5.1.1 indicator and producing in-depth national analytical reports on policy gaps for 20 Arab countries. The reports were validated with government officials including national women machineries, ministries of interior and representatives from the judiciary and civil society. These consultations were followed by a series of training events to further build the capacity of member States to measure progress in laws and policies governing gender equality and to identify key elements to be incorporated in the reformulation of laws while applying international standards. In addition, best practices from the region were made available to member States to facilitate South-South cooperation. To this end, the subprogramme developed a virtual portal on Gender Justice and Equality in Law in the Arab Region to showcase regional successes and legal amendments that are in line with international standards and highlight gaps that still require action. The portal also provides users with access to legislation by member States related to the various indicators of SDG 5 to further facilitate the sharing of good practices. A colour-coded dashboard of the region, updated annually, creates another opportunity for countries to identify regional trends.

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Progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see figure 22.III).

Figure 22.III

**Performance measure: number of new policies and legislation that reduce gender-related inequalities in the Arab region (cumulative)**



### Planned results for 2023

#### Result 1: employment perspectives for vulnerable groups in the Arab region

##### Programme performance in 2021 and planned target for 2023

22.34 The work of the subprogramme contributed to 32 men and 33 women from Jordan and Lebanon participating in community policy workshops focused on strengthening regulatory procedures and non-government programmes, which did not meet the planned target of strengthened regulatory and promotion programmes in 2 member countries.

22.35 In addition, the work of the subprogramme contributed to 78 small and medium enterprises across the Arab Region utilizing the prototype of the digital enabling platform, the MSMEs Toolbox, which exceeded the target of 35. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.3).

Table 22.3

#### Performance measure

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
Regional consultation on development of the digital enabling portal to create an inventory of the needs of and support programmes available to small and	First regional centre for entrepreneurship to support digitization and promotion of innovative solutions for the resurgence of micro-, small and	65 people (32 men and 33 women) from Jordan and Lebanon participated in community policy workshops focused on strengthening regulatory	3 national centres for entrepreneurship established Strengthened networks of micro-, small and medium-	Increase in the number of SMEs operated/founded by women and youth in 2 member States

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2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
medium-sized enterprises	medium-sized enterprises established (see <a href="https://coe.unescwa.org/index.html">https://coe.unescwa.org/index.html</a> )	procedures and non-government programmes	sized enterprises in 7 Arab States	
-	-	78 small and medium enterprises across the Arab Region utilized the prototype of the digital enabling platform, the MSMEs Toolbox	Member States adopt the science, technology and innovation road map for the Arab countries	Create a national policy-community dialogue in 3 member States to strengthen the entrepreneurial enabling environment

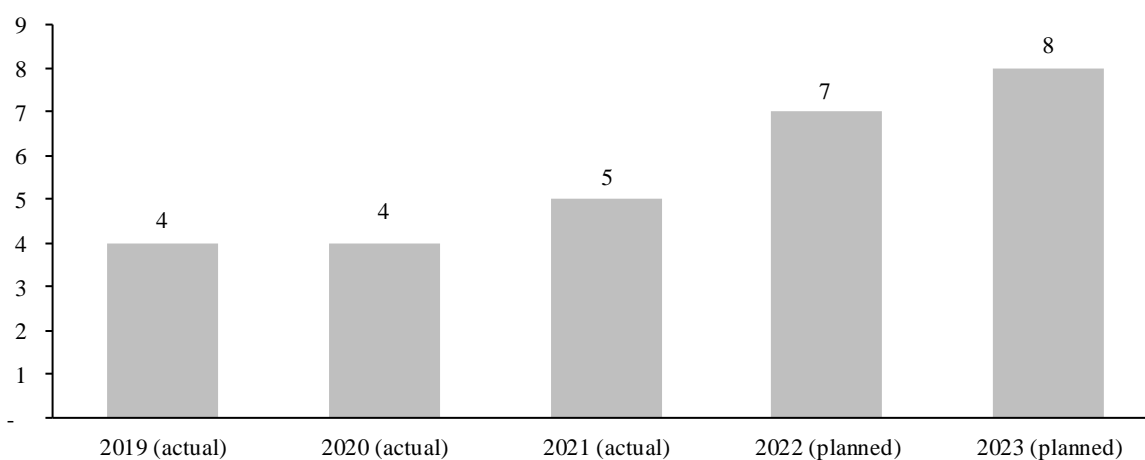
### Result 2: accelerated coherent ageing policies in the Arab region

#### Programme performance in 2021 and planned target for 2023

22.36 The work of the subprogramme contributed to an additional policy having been developed in the Arab region (Lebanon), which met the planned target. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see figure 22.IV).

Figure 22.IV

**Performance measure: total number of Arab countries with coherent ageing policies (cumulative)**  
(Number of countries)



### Result 3: increasing the inclusiveness of social protection systems in the Arab region

#### Programme plan for 2023

22.37 The subprogramme developed an analytical *Social Protection Programme – Rapid Assessment Framework* (SPP-RAF) that enhances member States' ability to provide effective and efficient social assistance. This framework was implemented in Jordan, where the

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subprogramme analysed the social registry of the national aid fund and built related capacity of its civil servants. In the Sudan, the subprogramme worked with the Ministry of Social Development on the development of registration procedures for potential vulnerable groups into social programmes. It developed a road map to integrate social databases into one comprehensive social management information system and worked with stakeholders on establishing coordination mechanisms for shock-responsive social protection. The subprogramme has conducted a ministerial forum to develop a joint vision for social protection post COVID-19.

### *Lessons learned and planned change*

22.38 The lesson for the subprogramme was to integrate more hands-on technical advice on how to nationally implement and contextualize policies changes. In applying the lesson, the subprogramme will expand its support for Jordan by analysing additional social assistance programmes and develop tools for building effective poverty graduation approaches. The SPP-RAF is planned to be rolled out in partnership with additional member States and it will be tested to accommodate complementary labour market analytics and prospects to tailor pathways to graduation for social assistance beneficiaries. The subprogramme plans the in-country development of comprehensive social protection country profiles with member States to jointly identify entry points to advance social protection reforms in Arab countries. Expected progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.4).

Table 22.4  
**Performance measure**

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
Rapid expansion of non-contributory social protection programmes with a determined shift from general subsidies to poverty targeted cash transfers in the Arab region and extended coverage of a larger section of the population through contributory social protection (social insurance) in ten member States (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab republic, Tunisia)	During COVID-19, at least eight member States (Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia) rapidly channelled additional assistance to households covered by social insurance and social assistance and set up temporary emergency programmes directed at informal workers who were neither covered by social assistance nor social insurance	179 people [66 males and 113 females] trained from 17 member States on tools to increase inclusiveness of social protection systems  1 member State (Jordan) analysed the inclusiveness of its social protection systems	Number of people trained [disaggregated by sex] from number of MS on the three tools to increase inclusiveness of social protection systems  Number of countries that have adopted measures to increase the number of vulnerable persons (e.g., persons w/ disabilities, informal workers, female headed households etc.) in social and poverty-graduation programmes (e.g., cash transfers, housing etc.)	Increase in the number of countries who have adopted measures to increase the number of vulnerable persons (e.g., persons w/ disabilities, informal workers, female headed households etc.) in social or poverty-graduation programmes (e.g., cash transfers, housing etc.).



**Subprogramme 3**  
**Shared economic prosperity**

**Objective:** to achieve equitable economic growth, amplify regional interconnectedness and integration, and advance the effective implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in support of the 2030 Agenda.

**Strategy**

22.39 To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will:

- (a) provide assistance to member States with the monitoring, analysis and forecasting of macroeconomic and social variables and the implications of national policies on economic growth and fiscal space for the achievement of the SDGs;
- (b) provide advisory services and capacity-building on best practices for allocating resources, mainstreaming the SDGs and mitigating structural economic challenges;
- (c) further expand its support to member States on monitoring their social expenditures by providing user-friendly methodological tools to allow for analysis of fiscal policy choices and their linkages to social expenditure and fiscal sustainability;
- (d) provide advice and build capacity for greater compliance by member States with trade agreements to which they are parties and for negotiating new agreements, such as the Arab Customs Union, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area. To that end, the subprogramme will develop user-friendly toolkits to simulate the socio- and macroeconomic impact of new trade agreements. Specifically, a virtual help desk will accelerate trade negotiations and South-South exchange among member States and engage the private sector in the negotiation processes of the Arab Customs Union;
- (e) improve its platform to monitor and evaluate Arab economic integration through key performance indicators and indices. It will build on existing geographic information systems for transport networks and facilities in the Arab region, to assess and compare transport performance and connectivity. This will be paired with advice to member States to improve road safety and facilitated access to the United Nations Road Safety Fund; and
- (f) develop nationally tailored SDG costing calculators, SDG financing simulators supported by methods to capture SDG synergies that serve as building blocks to advance integrated national financing frameworks. The tools aim to support member States to monitor, analyse and simulate financing for development trajectories, estimate SDG financing gaps and identify policies to enhance growth and financing to achieve national SDG targets. A dedicated dynamic on-line interface for this purpose will be established to serve as a tool to avail sustainable advisory support to member States in this regard.

22.40 The above-mentioned work is expected to result in:

- (a) Fiscal policies that are connected to economic diversification, debt sustainability, social development and the SDGs, while ensuring macroeconomic stability;
- (b) Improved capacity of policymakers to understand debt sustainability risks and options for effective debt management that creates fiscal space for the SDGs through sustainable debt finance and debt reduction mechanisms, including debt swaps;

(c) Greater human and institutional capacity among Arab Governments to design and implement sound trade, logistics and transport policies that increase connectivity and contribute to economic growth and prosperity; and

(d) Integrated SDG costing and financing simulators to support the implementation of national development plans and related targets in line with the 2030 Agenda.

**Programme performance in 2021**

**Improved transport connectivity in the Arab region**

22.41 To improve the cost-effectiveness of land transport connectivity amongst ESCWA member States, and between member States and the rest of the world, the subprogramme undertook several initiatives benefitting national authorities of transport, trade, commerce, and customs of all member States in addition to the private sector. The work was done in collaboration with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Road Transport Union, the Euromed Transport Support Project and the Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean. The subprogramme organized an expert group meeting on the corridors for vital connectivity, which assessed the potential benefits of connecting regional transport networks to bolster inclusive economic and social development of the Arab region. It also organized several capacity-building workshops, one of which trained representatives from national transport authorities of all member States on ways of executing smooth and efficient border crossing procedures, in addition to customized workshops for Kuwait, Lebanon, State of Palestine, and Tunisia on the implementation of the Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets, 1975 (TIR Convention). The subprogramme subsequently produced a regional study assessing and addressing the availability of transport facilities and emphasizing the importance of the application of the TIR Convention, including a forward-looking analysis on the collective application of e-TIR on a land transport corridor connecting the East Mediterranean and Gulf Cooperation Countries. Progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.5).

Table 22.5

**Performance measure**

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>
12 member States are members of TIR	Egypt joined TIR	Iraq is in the final stages of accessing TIR

**Planned results for 2023**

**Result 1: social expenditure priorities in coherence with macro fiscal policy**

**Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023**

22.42 The work of the subprogramme contributed to 2 member States (Jordan and Tunisia) completing the analysis of their public expenditure data, establishing a social expenditure monitor, and improving their capacity to use the tool, which met the planned target of 2 member States rebalance social expenditures across priorities between 2021 and 2022 budgets,

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applying social expenditure monitoring. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.6).

Table 22.6

### Performance measure

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>	<i>2022 (planned)</i>	<i>2023 (planned)</i>
Member States provided with a common social expenditure monitoring framework	2 member States (Jordan and Tunisia) began applying social expenditure monitoring methodology to monitor budget expenditure on social priorities	2 member States (Jordan and Tunisia) completed the analysis of their public expenditure data, established a social expenditure monitor, and improved their capacity to use the tool	More than 2 member States revise budget allocations, using social expenditure monitoring, with the aim of rebalancing social expenditures across priorities	More than 3 member States use the Social Expenditure Monitor tool to inform social expenditure allocations in support of national priorities

### Result 2: debt swap for improved resources for climate and development finance

#### Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023

22.43 The work of the subprogramme contributed to one member State (Jordan) establishing a national taskforce to operationalize a debt swap, which met the planned target. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.7).

Table 22.7

### Performance measure

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>	<i>2022 (planned)</i>	<i>2023 (planned)</i>
Increased understanding among member States of debt vulnerabilities	3 member States (Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia) expressed interest in operationalizing the debt-swap mechanism	1 member State (Jordan) established a national taskforce to operationalize a debt swap for a climate or development finance initiative	1 or more additional member States agree to set aside an amount of debt to swap for a climate or development finance initiative	1 or more member States increase expenditure on climate or SDG initiatives, utilizing funds from the debt swap

**Result 3: improved effectiveness of economic policies from a gender perspective**

**Proposed programme plan for 2023**

22.44 Based on requests from member States to understand the evaluation of their performance on a set of global indices<sup>1</sup>, the subprogramme developed a platform to explain the methodology and data sets used for the calculation of 11 indices and simulate the impact of a potential policy change on the scoring of individual indicators and overall ranking. The subprogramme piloted the platform with data on 3 of the 11 indices and convened a meeting for focal points from all member States to validate the methodology and set the way forward. It developed a prototype interface tested by the focal points and completed the second phase of the development including all 11 global indices.

*Lessons learned and planned change*

22.45 Based on the implementation of previous simulation platforms, the subprogramme learned that it is important to closely link the development of the platform with the user experience and to allow member States to discuss their experience using the platform. In applying this lesson, the subprogramme will establish a network of users to share experiences, transfer knowledge and promote the use of the platform to new users, and work with the network to adjust the functionalities of the platform to better cater for user needs. Finally, it will organize national workshops to support two member States in the use of the platform and develop new policies to improve female economic participation. Expected progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.8).

**Table 22.8  
Performance measure**

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>	<i>2022 (planned)</i>	<i>2023 (planned)</i>
–	Global Gender Gap Index Scoring by member States ranged between 0.494 and 0.655 as compared to the Global Gender Gap score of 0.686	Global Gender Gap Index Scoring by member States ranged between 0.492 and 0.716 as compared to the Global Gender Gap score of 0.677	At least 2 member States develop new policies to improve female economic participation	Improved ranking by at least 1 member State on the Global Gender Gap Index

<sup>1</sup> The Global Competitiveness Index, the Global Gender Gap Index, the Global Innovation Index, the Global Cybersecurity Index, the ICT Development Index, the Network Readiness Index, the e-Government Development Index, the Digital Accessibility Rights Evaluation, the e-Participation Index, the B2C e-Commerce Index and the AI Readiness Index.

**Subprogramme 4**

**Statistics, the information society and technology**

**Objective:** to strengthen the development of official statistical frameworks, improve the quality and availability of statistics and advance the information society by accelerating the integration of technology and innovation for sustainable development in the Arab region.

**Strategy**

22.46 To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will:

- (a) Promote the use of new data sources in official statistics; digitalization of data services; innovation based on information and communications technology (ICT), artificial intelligence and frontier technologies. This will include normative work and capacity development on the use of big and open data and geospatial technology to modernize national statistical systems and monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- (b) Provide technical assistance to Arab States on the use of new technologies for censuses and surveys, and register-based data to produce demographic and social, economic and environment and multidomain statistics with required disaggregated levels to leave no one behind;
- (c) Build capacity for greater compliance with international statistical standards to provide evidence that informs policies, acting as the regional custodian of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (General Assembly resolution 68/261);
- (d) Mobilize intergovernmental networks of statistical experts to coordinate and develop statistical capacities for implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data;
- (e) Work towards a greater use of the potentials of digital development to address social and economic challenges and achieve greater digital inclusion of citizens in member States;
- (f) Facilitate the exchange of experience and promote entrepreneurial technologies for sustainable development by providing a platform for dialogue on regional challenges related to innovation and technology as well as for the development of partnerships;
- (g) Promote the utilization of science, technology and innovation for development and incentivize member States to devise policies that enable them to benefit from ICT, artificial intelligence and frontier technologies along with mainstream technologies in the new normal;
- (h) Serve as a forum to reach regional consensus and provide policy advice in the areas of Arab Internet governance, digital government, electronic governance and enhance the capacities of policymakers to harness technology, tools and techniques, while remaining mindful of the consequences of technology on people;
- (i) Identify and share global and regional best practices in technology and statistics, building and maintaining networks of practitioners and promoting South-South cooperation.

22.47 The above-mentioned work is expected to result in:

- (a) Strengthened coherence and coordination of statistical activities by member States, based on national statistical frameworks and in cooperation with regional statistical agencies, to cover the data needs of the 2030 Agenda;

- (b) Greater compliance with international statistical standards and recommendations leading to more consistent data about the region and more effective use of statistics in policymaking;
- (c) Effective national and regional strategies with improved synergies between science, technology and innovation, supporting transformation to knowledge and digital economies, building science, technology and innovation ecosystems and promoting technology-based entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises;
- (d) Improved capacity of policymakers in the region to utilize new data, statistics, technology and knowledge products, tools and techniques to inform policy decisions to deal with the medium- and long-term ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (e) Growth-based digital inclusion, in accordance with the principle of “leave no one behind” and protecting the rights of people in the technology and information age.

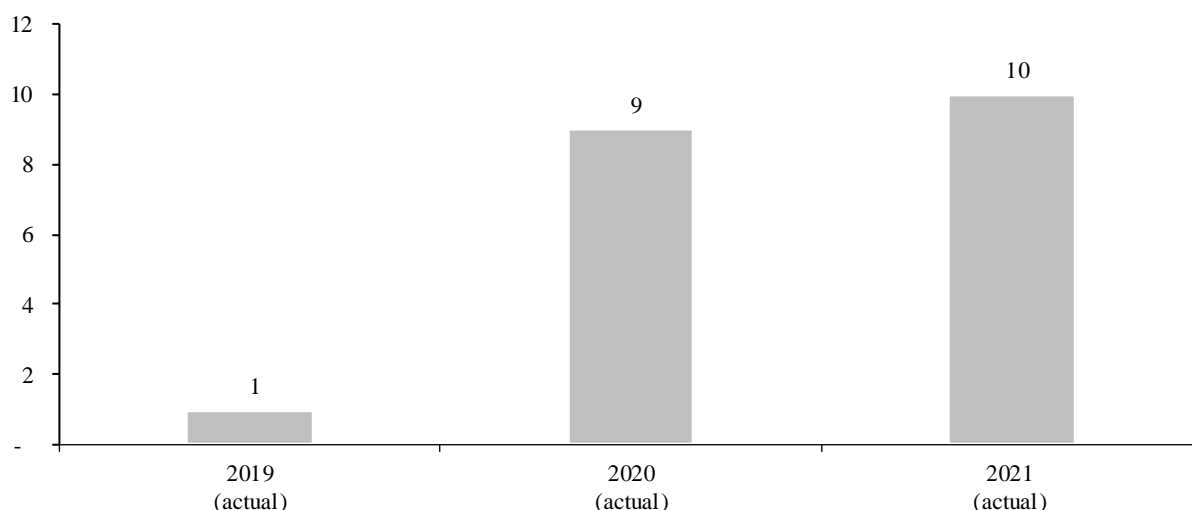
### **Programme performance in 2021**

#### **Increased usage of socio-economic statistical profiles of member States by United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in the Arab region**

22.48 In line with the United Nations development system reform and to position the United Nations to deliver as one, the subprogramme deployed a data repository on social, economic, environment and multidomain statistics to facilitate public access to data collected from primary sources, such as national statistical offices in member States, government institutions in the Arab region, specialized studies published by the United Nations organizations and other international entities. Visitors to the portal enjoy free, unrestricted access to full repositories of data, with pre-created comprehensive visualizations, and easy-to-use self-service visualization tools to create customized dashboards, which can be exported in multiple formats and shared with others online. The portal enables the display of data using tables, various chart types, and geographic maps. Users can easily search through all available data and content, download reports and publications and browse news items. In the same vein, the subprogramme worked closely with the UNCTs in the region to better understand their need for data in support of their analysis and decision making beyond the above repository. Customized statistical profiles of member States were shared with UNCTs to inform the development of common country analyses and the UN sustainable development cooperation framework. Initially the subprogramme piloted this approach with the UNCT Lebanon and has since been expanding this offer to an additional eight UNCTs (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates). Progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see figure 22.V).

Figure 22.V

**Performance measure: number of UNCTs making use of the statistical profiles of member States in the Common Country Analysis and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (cumulative)**



**Planned results 2023**

**Result 1: regional knowledge and data repository to strengthen government decision-making processes**

**Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023**

22.49 The work of the subprogramme contributed to government staff from five member States (Egypt, State of Palestine, Qatar, Lebanon and Tunisia) registering with the knowledge repository, which met the planned target. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.9).

Table 22.9

**Performance measure**

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
United Nations development system entities in the region request ESCWA to lead the knowledge management task force of the regional collaborative platform to conceptualize the Arab regional knowledge repository	Data hub, a publicly accessible knowledge and data repository (portal), available for the Arab region	Deployment of the knowledge repository as a publicly accessible regional good (achieved in 2020) Government staff from 5 member States (Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar, State of Palestine and Tunisia) registered with the knowledge repository	At least 50 per cent of member States use the knowledge repository to inform the development of sectoral policies	At least 75 per cent of member States use the knowledge repository to inform the development of sectoral policies

**Result 2: improving production and communication of data on the Sustainable Development Goals to leave no one behind**

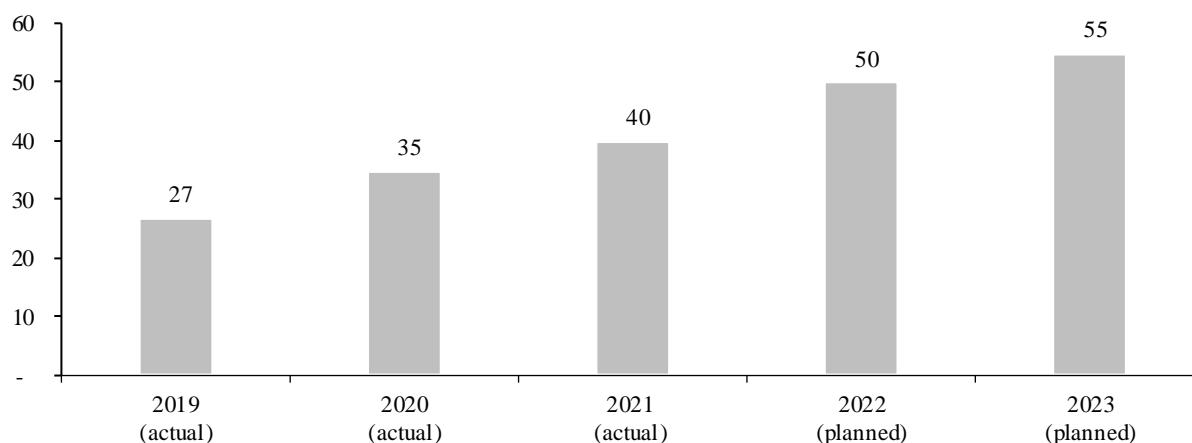
**Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023**

22.50 The work of the subprogramme contributed to improving the percentage of country data available in the official global database on the sustainable development goals, including disaggregation of data, to 40 per cent in 2021, which met the planned target. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see figure 22.VI).

Figure 22.VI

**Performance measure: percentage of country data available in the official global database on the Sustainable Development Goals**

(Percentage)



**Result 3: advancing digital development assessments and strategies at the national and regional level in the Arab region**

**Proposed programme plan for 2023**

22.51 In its resolution 70/125, the General Assembly encouraged Member States to conduct reviews of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) action lines to assess progress in leveraging the role of the information society to advance sustainable development. The subprogramme devised a conceptual model that intersects the action lines of the WSIS with the SDGs and supported member States in reviewing the five clusters of digital development. A self-assessment on the process was undertaken to inform the second round of reviews. In 2021, partners such as the United Nations Telecommunications Union (ITU), UNCTAD, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) joined efforts to support the reviews and advise on designing national digital development strategies.

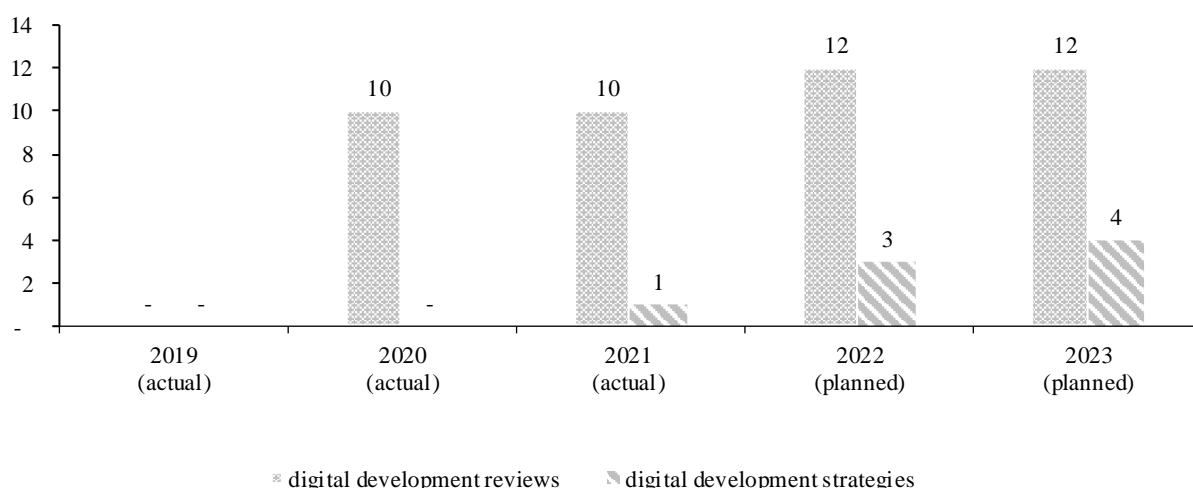
*Lessons learned and planned change*

22.52 The lesson for the subprogramme was that member States emphasized the need for regular national reviews to better assess whether their citizens benefit from digital development and develop more targeted strategies. The self-assessment also indicated the need for a capacity



building programme for the national digital development focal points. In applying the lesson, the subprogramme will support an increased number of member States in their second review, increase the frequency of regional expert group meetings and provide technical advice to national and sectoral focal points. In addition, the subprogramme will promote the formalization of intersectoral national expert working groups in support of the annual review process. The subprogramme also plans to engage its partners more closely in the thematic peer review, as one of the final steps of the process. Working with the League of Arab States towards a regional ICT strategy, the subprogramme will also complete a measurement model for national and regional digital development will converge. Expected progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see figure 22.VII).

**Figure 22.VII**  
**Performance measure: number of member States undertaking national digital development reviews and developing strategies (cumulative)**



**Subprogramme 5**  
**2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals coordination**

**Objective:** to accelerate progress towards sustainable development in the Arab region in line with the 2030 Agenda and to advance intraregional collaboration and a multi-stakeholder approach to key regional and subregional sustainable development issues.

**Strategy**

22.53 To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will:

- (a) Support the alignment of national development plans with the 2030 Agenda, and advocate for an integrated approach to the achievement of, follow-up to and review of the SDGs. Building on the results of the Commission’s activities on the 2030 Agenda in the past years, including the annual Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) and the Arab Sustainable Development Report (ASDR), and the analysis of emerging policy trends and challenges, including those stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, for the ASDR 2024, the subprogramme will continue to demonstrate the necessity and value added of a nationally owned, integrated approach to the 2030 Agenda;

- (b) Improve and add platforms to strengthen consensus-building, peer learning and knowledge transfer between Arab countries. It will support an expanding set of stakeholders in understanding and engaging with the 2030 Agenda by organizing forums and meetings and creating learning opportunities on the 2030 Agenda;
- (c) Use the AFSD as an annual opportunity for Governments to outline and exchange experiences and good practices in support of the 2030 Agenda and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (d) Harness the respective support of the Arab NGO Network for Development, the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutes, the LAS, the IsDB, UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to continue providing an opportunity for regional platforms of civil society organizations and parliamentarians to feed into larger, multi-stakeholder discussions; and
- (e) Provide a review on the implementation progress of the SDGs at the regional level, implementation progress, and policy recommendations for regional action.

22.54 The above-mentioned work is expected to result in:

- (a) Improved institutional coordination and evidence-based national policies and processes that reflect an understanding of the key principles of leaving no one behind, the rights-based and multi-stakeholder approach to sustainable development and a more integrated formulation of strategies and targets across the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) Increased ability of government and non-government stakeholders to partake in the implementation of, follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda in Arab countries; and increased opportunities for different groups to engage with each other across national, subregional, regional and global forums;
- (c) Formulation of recovery plans that, in addition to mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic itself, build on and integrate the principles and Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

### **Programme performance in 2021**

#### **Increased solution-based discussions during the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development for 2021**

22.55 In an effort to offer solutions on building back better for member States, the subprogramme in collaboration with 15 regional UN entities and the League of Arab States, developed a series of policy briefs that shed light on the direct impact of the coronavirus disease on the SDGs (1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17) in Arab countries. The policy briefs highlighted measures taken by different member States to counter the effects of the pandemic and offered a menu of response measures that contributed to leaving no one behind, including for example through technological innovations to ensure business continuity and the provision of essential services. Accordingly, during the AFSD, the number of plenaries was significantly increased to 13 and they were organized around the forward-looking recommendations of the policy briefs guiding a targeted exchange among participants on the solutions developed at the national level to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and informed the key messages resulting from the Forum on a more inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19. Progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.10).

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Table 22.10

### Performance measure

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)
AFSD resulted in consolidated messages on dismantling the main barriers to achievement of the SDGs in the region	AFSD cancelled due to COVID-19 15 regional UN entities consolidate analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on SDGs in Arab States	Key regional messages and policy recommendations on solutions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 endorsed by member States (E/HLPF/2021/3/Add.5)

### Planned results 2023

#### Result 1: peer-learning and capacity-building for the new generation of voluntary national reviews

##### Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023

22.56 The work of the subprogramme contributed to enhanced and productive interaction between government stakeholders (Jordan, Iraq) coordinating the voluntary national review process and preparing national SDG reports, which met the planned target.

22.57 In addition, the subprogramme postponed the survey on the effectiveness of the community of practice, which did not meet the planned target of the collection of positive feedback on the effectiveness of the community of practice. The subprogramme focused on expanding the membership of the community of practice to include non-governmental experts on voluntary national reviews and the development of a workplan to fully activate the community of practice. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.11).

Table 22.11

### Performance measure

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
Member States call for enhanced peer learning on voluntary national reviews during the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, held in April 2019, and the ESCWA Executive Committee meeting held in June 2019	Launch of the community of practice on voluntary national reviews in the Arab region, with exchanges between government officials	Enhanced and productive interaction between government stakeholders (Jordan, Iraq) coordinating the voluntary national review process and preparing national Sustainable Development Goal reports	Sustained interactions and exchanges between government stakeholders coordinating the voluntary national review process and/or preparing national Sustainable Development Goal reports	Ministries of planning and national statistical offices and/or supreme audit institutes coordinate in two Arab countries to produce evidence-based voluntary national reviews
Regional capacity-building workshop on voluntary		Postponed survey to collect feedback on the effectiveness of the		

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2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
national reviews in October		community of practice to 2022.		
Agreement among member States to establish a community of practice coordinated by ESCWA				

### Result 2: recovery and post-COVID-19 development planning integrates the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

#### Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023

22.58 The work of the subprogramme contributed to increasing the focus of member States on sustainable recovery, linked to SDG objectives in the long-term, which did not meet the planned target of one COVID-19 recovery plan in the Arab region integrating the 2030 Agenda to accelerate progress on the SDGs. The target was not met due to a programmatic shift towards regional advocacy efforts, mainly through the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.12).

Table 22.12

#### Performance measure

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
-	-	Increased focus of member States on sustainable recovery, linked to SDG objectives in the long-term	Two COVID-19 recovery plans in the Arab region integrate the 2030 Agenda to accelerate progress on the SDGs	Number of national development plans aligned with the 2030 Agenda

### Result 3: improved voluntary national review process through formalized intra-regional and inter-regional peer learning

#### Proposed programme plan for 2023

22.59 Voluntary national reviews are a key follow-up and review mechanism of the 2030 Agenda at the national level. The subprogramme supports member States in developing their voluntary national reviews through annually organizing regional workshops that provide them with space for dialogue and knowledge exchange on experiences and success stories during and after the voluntary national review process as well as engaging with other stakeholders. The subprogramme organizes these workshops in collaboration with the DESA and the LAS to pave the way for more focused inter- and intra-regional learning activities.

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### *Lessons learned and planned change*

22.60 Having engaged with DESA and observed activities conducted by other regional commissions to support the voluntary national review process, the lesson for the subprogramme was that twinning exercises organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) are an effective mechanism for peer-learning. In applying the lesson, the subprogramme will build on the experience of ESCAP in conducting twinning exercises to bring member States together for focused sharing of experiences on aspects of the voluntary national review process to be identified according to country needs. These exercises will bring together member States that have completed a voluntary national review with those planning to conduct one for the subsequent cycle, from within and outside the Arab region for discussions of solutions to challenges and identification of best practices to assist in their endeavours before, during and after a voluntary national review. The subprogramme will also implement other peer-learning approaches such as issue-based focus groups including on data, evaluation, whole-of-government, whole-of-society, partnerships, and leaving no one behind. Expected progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.13).

Table 22.13  
**Performance measure**

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>	<i>2022 (planned)</i>	<i>2023 (planned)</i>
Informal interaction between member states in workshops focusing on regional issues of concern	Informal interaction between member States in workshops focusing on regional issues of concern	Informal interaction between member States in workshops focusing on regional issues of concern	Member States endorse a formalized approach to peer learning	Number of member States benefitting from voluntary national review peer-learning approaches (twinning and issue-based focus groups)

### **Subprogramme 6 Governance and conflict prevention**

**Objective:** to advance just, peaceful and inclusive societies, especially for people living under occupation or in conflict or post-conflict settings; to improve governance and strengthen effective, efficient and accountable public institutions; and to enhance service delivery.

#### **Strategy**

22.61 To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will:

- (a) periodically assess the impact of conflict and occupation on the capacity of member States to achieve the SDGs and to define strategic options for inclusive human development in the Arab region;
- (b) support member States in evaluating human development challenges by developing an analytical tool to enable policymakers to identify vulnerabilities and design targeted policies for tackling them based on global indices related to human development, governance, environmental sustainability, political instability and the impact of conflict on development in the region;

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- (c) advance national governance and resilience capacities to mitigate specific shocks, assess and improve the effectiveness of crisis-response policies and lower risks associated with emerging socioeconomic, environment and governance challenges;
- (d) support and enhance the capabilities of Palestinian institutions to attain the SDGs and the right to self-determination, and to mitigate the impact of the Israeli occupation, particularly on service delivery and social and economic development, including decreasing the asymmetric dependency of the Palestinian economy on Israel;
- (e) support knowledge-sharing on the interdependence between governance, institutional quality and development gains by providing technical assistance, capacity-building and policy advice to improve the effectiveness and accountability of institution advance knowledge and assist governments and regional institutions in developing capacities at the individual, organizational, and institutional/societal levels to drive the transformational change to implement the 2030 Agenda;
- (f) Support Arab least developed countries within the framework of the 2021-2030 Programme of Action to enhance their institutional capacities for achieving the 2030 Agenda and graduating from the least developed country category;
- (g) support in strengthening competition regulatory and institutional reforms through facilitating cooperation among partners and member States as well as building their capacity through the annual Competition Forum for the Arab Region and knowledge sharing platforms;
- (h) provide member States with policy advice and capacity-building on open and digital government transformation and innovation, offering measurement tools to assess the progress achieved in digital transformation, guide the advancement of digital government services and open government strategies, disseminate knowledge on the impact of open government on socioeconomic development and promote best practices for achieving the SDGs, in particular Goals 16 and 17.

22.62 The above-mentioned work is expected to result in:

- (a) Enhanced conflict prevention through evidence-based risk management by policymakers;
- (b) Enhanced capacity of member States to assess the impacts of conflict on human development, including on well-being of women and girls as well as evidence-informed policy-making to ease the transitions into the labour market;
- (c) Enhanced national competition law and policy reform initiatives that contribute to prompting consumer welfare and competitive markets;
- (d) Improvement in the services provided by public institutions, with enhanced performance and accountability;
- (e) Enhanced capacity of member States to evaluate the effectiveness of their national development policies.

**Programme performance in 2021**

**Improved representation of the development challenges of Arab least developed countries in the preparation for the 5<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries**

22.63 As part of the preparations for the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) due to be held in Doha in 2022, the subprogramme initiated, in partnership with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and several Arab funds and programmes, a consultative process to produce a common development vision for the coming decade for the four ESCWA member States in the least developed countries category: Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen. The subprogramme issued a publication on the development opportunities and challenges for Arab least developed countries and organized bilateral meetings with the four member States, key Arab donor countries and major Arab funds and programmes. The subprogramme subsequently organized a regional meeting for the four Arab least developed countries and prepared a report on the development assistance provided during the last decade, with the aim of identifying common views among Arab countries to support the design and implementation of the future programme of action for least developed countries. The subprogramme further convened a side meeting on the margins of the First Preparatory Committee Meeting of the LDC5 Conference to reach a common development vision. This process brought forth the challenges faced by Arab least developed countries, including that of protracted conflict, which prevented them from meeting the criteria set forth in the Istanbul Programme of Action. Progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.14).

Table 22.14  
**Performance measure**

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>
–	4 Arab LDCs agree to work towards a common development vision for the next decade	4 Arab LDCs present a common vision for 2021 – 2030 included in the Zero Draft Outcome Document of the LDC5 conference

**Planned results for 2023**

**Result 1: public policy outcomes serve the Arab region through effective competition**

**Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023**

22.64 The work of the subprogramme contributed to the ratification by member States (Algeria, Kuwait, Morocco, United Arab Emirates) of a set of recommendations on competition assessment that build on OECD and UNCTAD guidelines, which met the planned target. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.15).

## Section 22 Economic and social development in Western Asia

Table 22.15

### Performance measure

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>	<i>2022 (planned)</i>	<i>2023 (planned)</i>
No harmonized approach to competition assessments in the Arab region	1 member State initiated an assessment aimed at strengthening and harmonizing its national competition policy framework	Ratification by member States (Algeria, Kuwait, Morocco, United Arab Emirates) of an assessment of the legislative and regulatory environment for competition in 22 Arab countries based on OECD and UNCTAD guidelines	At least 4 member States ratify a set of recommendations on competition assessments and policy reforms based on international standards	At least 1 member State introduces regulatory or institutional reforms targeted at improving competition

### Planned results 2023

#### Result 2: enhanced integration of transboundary risk planning, management and prevention into national development plans and policies

#### Programme performance in 2021 and target for 2023

22.65 The work of the subprogramme contributed to 1 member State (Jordan) integrating a developed risk assessment tool that addresses transboundary conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability into its national COVID-19 response strategy, which met the planned target. Progress towards the objective and target for 2023 are presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.16).

Table 22.16

### Performance measure

<i>2019 (actual)</i>	<i>2020 (actual)</i>	<i>2021 (actual)</i>	<i>2022 (planned)</i>	<i>2023 (planned)</i>
Expert group validated the approach on the transboundary risk assessment and management framework	Arab States gained access to contextualized (for the region) risk assessment tools and gained a better understanding of qualitative risk assessment approaches	1 member State (Jordan) integrated a developed risk assessment tool that addresses transboundary conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability into its national COVID-19 response strategy	At least 1 additional member State integrates the developed risk assessment tools that address transboundary conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability into its national development strategy  Regional technical dialogue platform is	Number of policies developed in the 3 focus member States that take into consideration the effects of transboundary conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability



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2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
			launched and enables peer exchanges among member States on transboundary risk management	

### Proposed programme plan for 2023

#### Result 3: enhanced capacity of policy makers to evaluate the effectiveness of their national development policies

22.66 The subprogramme is designing a development challenges index (DCI), and will produce national development assessments which will inform the evaluation of national policies. The subprogramme organized an expert group meeting to discuss the conceptual framework and methodology for the DCI and structure of the development challenges report which will include the Arab region's performance. The subprogramme then produced ten technical materials on the measurement methodology for the DCI, and on its three main dimensions: quality of human development, environmental sustainability, and good governance. Subsequently, the subprogramme produced a report that presents the final conceptual framework for the DCI as well as its main results for Arab countries and other regions, in addition to a study focused on the Arab region's development challenges.

#### *Lessons learned and planned change*

22.67 Learning from the experience of developing the Arab Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index, the subprogramme recognized the importance of first having consultations with stakeholders at the sub-regional level on the findings of the global index to discuss its relevance at the sub-regional level and hence, generate interest from member States to produce national development challenges assessments. In applying the lesson, the subprogramme will organize three sub-regional meetings which will include focal points from member States to discuss and endorse the DCI and will also develop a toolkit to produce nationally tailored DCIs and assessment reports. The subprogramme will then work directly with three countries to apply the toolkit to develop national development challenges assessments. Expected progress towards the objective is presented in the performance measure below (see table 22.17).

Table 22.17

#### Performance measure

2019 (actual)	2020 (actual)	2021 (actual)	2022 (planned)	2023 (planned)
–	–	Countries use global indices, such as the Human Development Index, to evaluate the effectiveness of their national development plans	At least 4 member States endorse the measurement framework for the global development challenges index	At least 3 countries develop national assessments and national human development challenges reports

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