

2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

29-30 May 2016

Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Information Note

I. BACKGROUND

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the result of a process led by Member States. It benefited from unprecedented broad participation of major groups and other stakeholders with the purpose of creating a shared vision for the future. It is a transformative and ambitious agenda that breaks away from the sectoral approach to development, which has so far characterized development efforts, and offers a unique opportunity to integrate the three development dimensions (social, economic and environment), while ensuring full alignment with the principles of good governance, rule of law, human rights, social justice, equality, transparency and accountability.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda entails in-depth understanding by Member States of the interdependence and complementarity among the goals and targets to ensure that national priorities are identified and outcomes of different national policies are mutually reinforcing. It also requires that countries adopt a multi-stakeholder approach and mobilize the necessary means of implementation, including institutions, knowledge, capacity, data and financial resources. At the regional level, efforts should focus, among other things, on promoting policy coherence, consistency and coordination on key regional issues and challenges with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Measuring progress on such a complex agenda will require follow-up and review mechanisms adapted to the different reporting requirements at the national, regional and global levels.

II. ARAB REGIONAL FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (AFSD)

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development is the central United Nations platform for political guidance and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its fourth session will be held from 11 to 20 July 2016 under the theme of “Leaving no one behind”, and will serve as an opportunity for countries and regions to report on progress since the endorsement of the agenda.

Regional commissions have a unique role in conveying the regional voice to the global arena. General Assembly resolution 70/1 gives them an unequivocal mandate “to assist Member States in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, provide technical support for SDG implementation through effective leveraging of the means of implementation, and facilitate effective follow-up and review”¹.

The Regional Fora for Sustainable Development are annual platforms to “facilitate Member States consensus on regional road maps for implementation of the SDGs, production of regional annual reports, peer review mechanisms, the setting of norms, and examination of opportunities to strengthen national institutional frameworks for coordinated implementation of the SDGs”².

¹ Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Role of the Regional Commissions (27 September 2015).

² Ibid.

Building on the results of the first two High-Level Fora on Sustainable Development, convened respectively in Amman in 2014 and Manama in 2015, and the leadership role ESCWA and its partners have played in promoting regional dialogue and consensus building, ESCWA will organize the 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from 29 to 30 May 2016 in cooperation with the members of Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and the League of Arab States, acting upon General Assembly resolution 70/1 and its Executive Committee's call to provide support to its Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The AFSD, which will meet annually, is intended as a primary regional platform for cohesive and coordinated implementation of Agenda 2030 in the Arab region. The findings and recommendations, conveying key messages from the region, will be submitted to and presented at the HLPF.

III. PROPOSED FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE 2016 AFSD

The 2016 Arab Forum will be organized into four components:

1. Understanding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal, integrated and transformative plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It is holistic in nature, highlighting the need to take into account synergies and trade-offs across SDGs.

Objective: To introduce the concepts underlying the 2030 Agenda, along with the four components of the Agenda³, with focus on the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into development planning and on possible synergies and trade-offs across the sustainable development goals and targets.

2. Moving From Commitment to Action at National Level. Implementation at national level will require countries to adapt the 2030 Agenda to national contexts and priorities, while taking into consideration the means of implementation and follow-up and review mechanisms needed to assess progress.

Objective: To discuss approaches to implementation, including the setting of priorities and the consequent integration of the SDGs into national development initiatives; and the identification of challenges to national implementation and monitoring and ways to address them through the effective leveraging of the means of implementation and the development of initiatives and mechanisms to evaluate, measure and report on progress.

3. Achieving the SDGs through Addressing Regional Challenges and Priorities. Arab countries will greatly benefit from deliberating on key issues of regional and sub-regional importance with a view to promoting policy coherence and enhancing national development implementation and outcomes. They will also greatly benefit from linking with global level debates through a common stand on key regional issues, such as water, energy, food security, employment, trade, transport and migration. Conflict and crises will also be discussed as critical challenges to the advancement of the region.

Objective: To provide a platform for Arab countries to discuss regional challenges, determine regional priorities, and discuss and agree on a regional roadmap that promotes policy coherence, consistency and coordination for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

³ Declaration, Sustainable Development Goals and Targets, Means of Implementation and the Global Partnership, and Follow-up and Review

4. The Way Forward – Ensuring that No One is Left Behind. The Arab Forum on Sustainable Development is entrusted to convey to the HLPF the regional voice on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Arab countries will thus need to discuss the operational modalities of the Forum. The discussion will be preceded by a recapitulation of the current and future challenges and opportunities for implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region as identified during the two-day deliberations.

Objective: To discuss means to enhance the role of the AFSD as an annual venue to exchange views on opportunities, successes, and obstacles, engage in a regional dialogue on follow-up and review, and report on the progress achieved in addressing key regional challenges.

IV. MODALITIES

The 2016 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development will be held over two days. It will serve as a participatory consultative dialogue engaging Government officials, civil society actors, academics and international organizations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Forum will be structured in four main sessions. Each session will be led by a facilitator who will ensure that the discussions remain focused, while a rapporteur for each session will identify the key issues and directions for action emerging from the discussions.

V. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The outcome report of the Forum will be based on a summary of the key messages and reflect the main points of discussion during the Forum sessions, including opportunities and challenges and key priorities as expressed by participating Member States and other stakeholders.

The report will be submitted to the HLPF in July and to the 29th ESCWA Ministerial Session later this year.

VI. MEETING VENUE AND PARTICIPANTS

The 2016 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development will be convened at **Kempinski Hotel in Amman, Jordan on 29 and 30 May 2016** and will bring together around 80 participants that will include ministers and senior government officials, regional organizations, civil society and private sector representatives, UN agencies and other international organizations.

VII. DOCUMENTATION

The meeting will be informed by the following documents:

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/70/L.1), available in Arabic and English at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to the 47th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, available in English at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-E.pdf>
- Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level

- Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development

The Forum documentation will be available on the following dedicated webpage which will be updated regularly. For updates please visit the following weblink: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/arab-forum-sustainable-development-2016>.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE

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