

## **Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

1. We, the representatives of the member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), assembled in Doha at the twenty-ninth session of the Commission, held from 13 to 15 December 2016, reaffirm our commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>1</sup> in line with the region's specificities and development priorities and to achieve national ownership and leadership of the development process.

2. We note that success in implementing the 2030 Agenda requires close cooperation between all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels, and the development of international partnerships founded on respect, equality and commitment to the Agenda as a reference and guidelines. We urge the establishment of partnerships between Governments, the private sector and civil society as key partners in development, and coordination between relevant regional organizations.

3. We stress that the 2030 Agenda serves as a global framework supporting national policies, which contains common goals that are the outcome of global consensus and guiding measures to monitor national progress in achieving the Goals, targets and indicators of the Agenda.

4. We also stress that the implementation of the Agenda at the national level must respect fundamental principles, including preserving the overall character of the Agenda and avoiding fragmentation; and maintaining consistency between its elements, the interlinkages between Goals and targets, the integration of policies and implementation mechanisms, and the conformity of outcomes.

5. We recall ESCWA resolution 322 of 16 December 2015 on the ESCWA plan of action to support member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially incorporating the Agenda's Goals in national development plans.

6. We recognize that we are currently required to prepare for a strong start in implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level, and to intensify efforts to develop institutional frameworks to lead, mobilize resources, build capacity, determine the roles of various partners and identify mechanisms to benefit more from national and international expertise, so as to ensure the success of the implementation process over the next 15 years.

7. We note with extreme concern the significant challenges facing the implementation of the Agenda in the region in view of the Israeli occupation, wars and conflicts, terrorism and foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Arab States, which have destroyed development infrastructure, restricted the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development, and created humanitarian problems gravely affecting Arab countries and neighbouring regions.

8. We emphasize that political instability in the region, conflict and the waves of refugees, resulting in demographic changes and pressure on national economies, infrastructure and services, are all serious challenges facing the implementation of the Agenda in conflict-affected countries. We highlight the effects of conflict on countries hosting refugees, and appreciate the support provided by Arab donor countries to conflict-affected countries.

9. We agree on the need to support least developed countries and to assist them in achieving a qualitative development shift, and to support war-torn and conflict-affected countries. We commend the serious efforts to end conflicts and wars in the region, given that development progress cannot be achieved while half of the region is blighted by conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015. A/RES/70/1.

10. We stress the need to support the Palestinian people and institutions in their efforts to achieve justice and equality and to reclaim their rights in accordance with international law and the Arab Peace Initiative, including the right to development and the right to self-determination. We emphasize that continuing Israeli efforts to impose the concept of an ethnically and religiously pure State fuels conflict in the region, complicates the achievement of peace and sustainable development, and violates the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations, other international instruments and humanitarian values.

11. We agree to closely focus on strengthening cooperation and undertaking continued dialogue on energy, water and food security issues, given that they are vital to achieving sustainable development, especially diversifying energy sources, combatting water scarcity and desertification, managing joint water resources and water in occupied and conflict-affected areas, ensuring food provision, eliminating hunger, protecting the environment and limiting the effects of and adapting to climate change, particularly in view of the Paris Agreement on climate change. We also agree to take necessary measures to strengthen infrastructure and material and human capacity.

12. We support efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women, in line with countries' domestic systems and legislation. We will strive to strengthen the role of women in all areas, and consider this objective a regional priority. We will continue to support such efforts in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

13. We confirm our support for national and regional plans aimed at meeting the development needs of young people and groups that have been marginalized through force of circumstance, including children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

14. We call for the employment of scientific and technological systems to identify methods and build national capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda, and for the development of a regional action plan for the achievement of aspects related to science, technology and innovation in the Arab region.

15. We recognize that there is no single institutional framework applicable to all countries for managing the adaptation, planning, implementation and follow-up processes. Each country must identify an institutional formula suitable to its national context, which complies with the integrated nature of the Agenda, and develop effective mechanisms for coordination and integration between relevant ministries, government institutions and national, regional and international partners, noting that the sustainable development process is managed by countries with the participation of all stakeholders.

16. We stress the importance of considering the implementation of the Agenda at the local level, taking into account disparities in development levels between areas within a country, in line with the comprehensive and inclusive nature of the Agenda.

17. We call for providing sufficient support to statistical offices in producing required data, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and preparing appropriate indicators to measure progress in achieving the Goals and targets of the Agenda, especially since many indicators in the Agenda are not currently employed. We also call for updating statistical offices to ensure the production of necessary data, and for strengthening dialogue between policymakers and data producers and users from all reliable sources, while recognizing the significant statistical requirements necessary for monitoring progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

18. We support the initiatives of some Arab countries aimed at adopting national strategies for statistical development, and we invite other countries to develop such strategies given their pivotal role in implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.

19. We appreciate the ESCWA secretariat's role in supporting the statistical capacity of Arab countries, and we support efforts made through existing and new mechanisms, such as the ESCWA Statistical Committee and specialized statistical teams, to enable Arab countries to develop frameworks for monitoring and evaluating progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, in line with national circumstances and priorities.

20. We reaffirm our commitment to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development<sup>2</sup> and to continuing the full implementation of its regional and international pillars, recognizing that the financing gap for achieving sustainable development is widening in view of public debts and the estimated requirements of sustainable development.

21. We stress the need for all developing countries to fulfil their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to development assistance so as to ensure that the right to development becomes a reality for all countries. We emphasize the importance of raising the necessary funds, and note that the direct losses suffered by war-torn countries and the resultant rebuilding needs, and the indirect losses incurred by conflict-affected countries and the region as a whole, increase the cost of lost development opportunities and widen the sustainable development financing gap.

22. We are concerned by global trends that might result in the erosion of official development assistance as a result of including humanitarian relief, refugee expenditure and climate change adaptation under existing financing commitments, and of developing an indicator that combines official development assistance with other financing sources (public, private, national and international) to indicate the amount of funding available to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, without taking into account disparities in the frameworks, conditions and burdens of the funding mobilized from these sources. As such, we confirm that South-South cooperation in achieving development is complementary, rather than an alternative, to North-South cooperation and official development assistance.

23. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening Arab intraregional trade in goods and services, and freeing it from all customs and non-customs regulations, in line with countries' international commitments, given that international trade is a key source of development funding and an auxiliary of inclusive sustainable growth. We stress the importance of efforts and initiatives to enhance regional integration by developing an Arab customs union and promoting a common Arab market to establish an Arab development space that employs Arab economic security in facing sustainable development financing challenges. We emphasize the importance of establishing an equitable and just trade system that achieves equality between countries and respects their independence, sovereignty and unity and avoids interfering in domestic affairs, and that gives priority to the development dimension and enables developing countries to actively participate in economic decision-making processes and standard-setting.

24. We appreciate increased financial contributions from Arab donors and greater direct Arab investment. We recognize that financing to achieve sustainable development in Arab countries requires fostering investment and development activities at the regional level. We commit to improving the investment and business climate and to ensuring financial inclusion so as to encourage greater Arab investment in the region and attract Arab migrant remittances through financial products developed by the Arab banking sector, by providing credit facilities for private funding, and by encouraging the private sector to invest in projects to support infrastructure so as to facilitate trade and lift non-tariff measures.

25. We affirm the importance of identifying a regional framework for dialogue on determining regional development priorities and methods to monitor progress, to overcome obstacles and to expedite

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, 2015. A/RES/69/313.

implementation, and of regional cooperation on policy and ensuring policy compatibility with the situation in the Arab region, especially regarding common and transnational issues, given the importance of the regional dimension in the 2030 Agenda in supporting national efforts to achieve sustainable development.

26. We stress the importance of involving more Arab countries in global processes for monitoring and reviewing progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and of promoting the role of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development in following up on the implementation process and in exchanging expertise and best practices.

27. We appreciate the constructive role undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat in supporting the participation of Arab countries in the preparatory process for developing the 2030 Agenda, and request the secretariat to continue supporting the implementation process in line with the strategies approved by member States, which it developed for that purpose. In this context, we request the secretariat to focus on the following:

(a) Continue to produce informative material on the implementation of the Agenda at the national level, and to focus on local development requirements in rural and urban areas;

(b) Prepare a concept paper on establishing an Arab forum for financing sustainable development in the region, which complements the role of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development;

(c) Prepare working papers on the interlinkages between the Agenda's economic, social, environmental, political/institutional and cultural dimensions and its 17 goals, and on the role of the various actors in its implementation, including Governments, civil society and the private sector;

(d) Develop approaches that facilitate incorporating and adapting the Agenda and its Goals and targets nationally and regionally, including an approach to identify sets of interlinked goals drawn from national priorities, so as to ensure effectiveness and efficiency; and implement programmes to build national capacity and transfer knowledge to benefit from regional and international initiatives;

(e) Prepare training material and programmes and the necessary guides to develop national capacity and assist decision-makers and development partners in the implementation process, including parliamentarians and civil society organizations;

(f) Continue to develop analysis tools that assist in determining interlinkages between goals, in accordance with country specificities and national plans, including network analysis, modelling and forecasting; and work with member States to build capacity in this field;

(g) Build national capacity to prepare reports on progress achieved in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and disseminate existing approaches to drafting such reports;

(h) Assist Arab countries in developing appropriate institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms between entities in national statistical offices, so as to improve efficiency in monitoring and evaluating progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets;

(i) Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the availability of good quality statistics for use in preparing indicators to measure progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in collaboration and coordination with the secretariat of the Arab Working Group on Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators and national statistical offices;

(j) Identify a narrow set of indicators, based on national and regional priorities while taking into account the capacity of Arab countries to provide the necessary indicators in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and international standards, so as to periodically monitor the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

28. From Doha, we reaffirm our commitment to working together in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so as to secure the future to which our peoples aspire.

8<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
15 December 2016