



Remarks of Sima Bahous

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Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Jan Eliasson,

Executive Secretary, Dr. Rima Khalaf;

Your Excellency Ms. Ambassador Fagea Al-Saleh

Representatives of RCM entities;

I am pleased to be with you today in my capacity as Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group (R-UNDG) for the Arab States, Middle East and North Africa.



I am thankful to be with you here at a crucial time for our important shared agenda.

The opportunities and challenges facing our region cut across the broadest spectrum of the issues that we cover, and it is only working together that we will be able to make the best contribution we can at this time that it is most needed.

As many of you know in October I chaired a meeting of the Regional UNDG in Amman, and we agreed on a number of important priorities that have direct bearing on our discussions here today.

First and foremost we are committed to continue to prioritize youth across all the development work we do. The Arab States region as well as the Middle East and North Africa are going through a tremendously important point in the demographic arc. Today more than half the population of the region is under 25 years of age, which means that we have an unparalleled opportunity to achieve significant positive societal transformation.

To do so however will require new approaches to opening space in society for young men and women to participate more, to contribute more and indeed to lead more across the economic, social, political and cultural spheres.

Several regions around the world have been able to take advantage of this moment to achieve major progress, and our objective as the UNDG – and I am sure all of us will agree – is to provide the best support we can to see that our region seizes this opportunity, too.



As we do so we will also prepare to stand with the countries and peoples of our region to implement high-quality, focused and coordinated programming in support of progress towards the next global development framework.

It is an exciting time right now as the world community moves quickly towards the next development framework, which will be agreed by Member States next September at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly.

I am pleased that these deliberations will continue to be strongly informed by the perspectives of the governments and the peoples of our region. Over 2013 and 2014 UNCTs and the Regional undg as well as ESCWA showed tremendous dedication to helping advance regional views on the next development framework.

As result we learned that people in our region want, for example, not only access to education but to real and high-quality learning, access not only to income but also to equity and productive employment, enjoyment not only of productivity but also of the peace and security that undergirds a decent life and allows for investments in the future.

Our work will also be guided by these views as over the course of 2015 we strive as the undg to become ever more "fit for purpose" for delivering results on the new development agenda, coordinating our work more effectively, pursuing greater



policy coherence, measuring and communicating our results more robustly and also pursuing a data revolution.

Indeed one of the main learnings over the course of implementing the Millennium Development Goals was the vital importance of numbers. I am pleased that as we move forward as the UNDG and the RCM will have chances to provide more support towards better and more timely data collection and monitoring in order to help Member States and civil societies to more effectively chart their courses forward with more clarity.

At the UNDG we also agreed a very important new framework for our response to Syria which I believe will leave a lasting mark on the way the UN goes about its work in crisis situations.

Namely, we agreed a resilience-based framework that is an important tool to complement the vital humanitarian response to this crisis with a scaled up resilience and development response. This is guided by national plans and process that will be translated to country chapters of the Regional, Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), which we will launch next week in Berlin along with OCHA and UNHCR and simultaneous to the rolling out of appeals for the 2015 Syria Response Plan.

This resilience based approach is an important advance in conceptual and practical terms, and I believe we will be well-served to give it prominence in our discussions today.



And finally in addition to agreeing responses on specific country contexts we also redoubled our commitment to working ever more closely with regional partners, especially the League of Arab States. We remain committed to strengthening our joint work with the League. This means continuing on our active joint programming like the *Arab Trade Initiative* and also looking constantly for new ways to join forces to multiply our effectiveness in support of development across the region.

Joining hands with the Arab League, the UNDG and the RCM in mobilizing the data revolution for sustainable development could be another promising avenue to discuss.

So since we have an excellent and rich agenda today, let me close here. I am looking forward to continue cooperation and exploring together innovative ideas to support the countries of our region to today's sessions. Thank you.

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