

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

Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2019
Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality in the Arab Region
UN House, Beirut, Lebanon, 9-11 April 2019

Information Note**I. BACKGROUND**

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (Arab Forum) is the primary regional mechanism for the follow up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region.¹ This regional Forum is also relevant at the global level; its outcome gives voice to the region at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The report of the Arab Forum sets out key messages emanating from the regional dialogue on the opportunities and challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda and reporting progress on key sustainable development priorities.

The importance of the Arab Forum also lies in its participatory approach. It comprises high-level representatives of ministries, bodies concerned with planning and following up on the 2030 Agenda, parliamentarians, a wide range of regional and international institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, academic and research centres, and the media, among others.

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2019 (AFSD-2019) builds on the successes of five previous fora, held in Beirut in 2018, Rabat in 2017, Amman in 2016 and 2014, and Manama in 2015. Its role and membership are set out in the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which defines the Arab Forum as an annual meeting bringing together Arab Governments and sustainable development stakeholders to discuss progress, review national and regional experiences, and consider the latest developments and implementation mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional levels.²

The organization of the AFSD-2019 relies on a strong partnership with the League of Arab States, a key partner in supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. In line with the UN Secretary-General's call for greater coherence and enhanced synergies within the United Nations development system at the regional level, the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development is a joint effort of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the Regional UNSDG. Similar to previous editions of the Arab Forum, a dedicated AFSD-2019 interagency task force has been set-up to ensure collaboration and coordination.

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1 on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" of 25 September 2015.

² ESCWA resolutions 327 (XXIX) (Doha, 13-15 December 2016) on the working mechanisms of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development; 314 (XXVIII) (Tunis, 15-18 September 2014) on the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development; and 322 issued at the second meeting of the Executive Committee (Amman, 14-16 December 2015) on supporting member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2019 ON THE THEME “EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND ENSURING INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY IN THE ARAB REGION”

A. THEME OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2019

The AFSD-2019 is implemented within the framework of ESCWA resolution 327 (XXIX) on the working mechanisms of the Arab Forum and in line with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019 (2019 HLPF). In line with the HLPF-2019 theme of “Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality”, the theme of the AFSD-2019 is **“Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality in the Arab Region”**.

B. OBJECTIVE AND FOCUS OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2019

The AFSD-2019 will be held during the fourth year following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The year 2019 marks the end of the first four-year cycle of follow-up and review whereby the global review of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be completed. In addition to the HLPF in July held under the auspices of ECOSOC, a Leaders’ Summit will be held under the auspices of the UN General Assembly on 24 (pm) to 25 September 2019 in New York.

As a regional platform dedicated to the 2030 Agenda, AFSD-2019 provides a unique opportunity for review and appraisal of where Arab countries stand, what practical approaches have been developed, and to what extent development planning and policies are in line with the 2030 Agenda key principles and SDGs. It is a timely opportunity for Arab countries and sustainable development stakeholders to exchange experiences, expertise and lessons learned on national and regional accomplishments, and on future work priorities to build on key regional development opportunities and address the many challenges that face the region. As most Arab countries have established institutional frameworks for enhanced coordination and coherence, and a large number engaged in the preparation of voluntary national reviews in 2019,³ this year’s forum will focus on the policy dimension, particularly policy coherence necessary to implement an integrated Agenda at the national level.

C. PROGRAMME OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2019

Over three days, the programme of the AFSD-2019 on the theme “Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality in the Arab Region” features a variety of plenaries, special sessions and workshop-style special events. The main components of the Forum are as follows:

Component 1 – Global and regional progress including reviews of specific goals

This component of AFSD-2019 takes stock of global and regional progress on the 2030 Agenda and includes reviews of specific SDGs. Through plenary and special sessions, this component will build on some initial findings of the Arab Sustainable Development Report 2019 and will focus on the SDGs under review this year; namely, SDG4, SDG8, SDG10, SDG13, SDG16 and SDG17.

Component 2 – Thematic focus: Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality in the Arab Region

A key component of the Forum will focus on this year’s theme; unpacking each of the three elements of AFSD-2019 thematic focus on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. The thematic focus will address policy interlinkages, policy coherence, mechanisms, and lessons learned. It will also highlight case studies from the Arab region and beyond.

³ Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Mauritania, Oman, and Tunisia will present their VNR reports in 2019.

Component 3 – National, regional and global processes including VNRs and messages to the global summit

This component will highlight national, regional and global follow-up and review processes. In an interactive special event, VNRs will be discussed as the key national follow-up and review process with due consideration regional trends, lessons learned, and the way forward. At the regional and global levels, this component will chart the input of the Arab Region into the HLPF-2019 at ECOSOC and GA levels.

D. OUTCOMES OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2019

Similar to previous sessions of the Arab Forum, the outcomes of the AFSD-2019 will set out the topics discussed to highlight main messages to participating member States and other stakeholders. It will also take stock of preparatory meetings and their respective outcomes. These include but are not limited to Arab Region Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda, the Regional Consultation on the Environment and Natural Resources for the 2019 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum, and the Regional Consultation on Climate Change for the 2019 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and High Level Political Forum.

The final report of AFSD-2019 will be presented by the Chair of AFSD-2019, as the main contribution of the Arab region to the High-Level Political Forum in July.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

A. DATE AND VENUE OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2019

The AFSD-2019 will be held at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon, from 9-11 April 2019. Logistical details will be made available on the AFSD-2019 web page:

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/arab-forum-sustainable-development-2019>.

B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

ESCWA is leading the preparation of the AFSD-2019 agenda through consultations with member States, UN agencies, the League of Arab States, and a broad range of resource persons and experts. The draft programme will be available on the AFSD-2019 web page and updated regularly.

C. PARTICIPANTS AND REGISTRATION

Participants include high-level representatives of Arab governments, including Ministers and senior officials responsible for planning and for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In line with the theme of the AFSD-2019 and 2019 HLPF, member States' delegations may also include representatives of government institutions involved in social development, poverty alleviation, economic development, employment, environment and natural resources, data and statistics, and technology among others. Regional intergovernmental organisations, civil society networks and organisations, parliamentarians, academic institutions and United Nations agencies working in the Arab region will also take part in this annual multi-stakeholder event. The AFSD-2019 is expected to attract around 300 participants.

To confirm attendance, please register by following this [link](#). Please make sure that you upload a clear colour copy of your passport when completing the online registration form.

Participants whose participation costs are covered by the organizers are requested to register **no later than 15 March 2019**. After this date, the logistical team will no longer be able to arrange for travel or stay.

D. TRAVEL AND ENTRY VISAS

Participants are requested to apply for entry visas directly at the Lebanese Embassy in their countries.

E. ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORT

Please note that ESCWA has identified a number of hotels in Beirut. Participants are requested to contact ESCWA for the list of hotels offering preferential rates. Please visit the web page of AFSD-2019 for detailed logistical information.

F. DOCUMENTATION

In addition to background papers on the AFSD-2019's theme, forum proceedings will be informed by information and data from the following documents:

- [General Assembly resolution 70/1](#) – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Global indicator framework adopted by the General Assembly ([A/RES/71/313](#)) and annual refinements contained in [E/CN.3/2018/2](#) (Annex II).
- [Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators](#) to the 49th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.
- [A/70/684](#) – 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. Available in English from.
- The [Paris Agreement](#).
- [Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States](#) [in Arabic only].
- [Voluntary National Reviews Handbook](#), 2019.
- UNRISD Flagship Report, 2016 for [Policy Innovations Transformative Change](#).
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2016 [web page](#).
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2017 [web page](#).
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2018 [web page](#).

G. CORRESPONDENCE

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