



## Regional Civil Society Organizations Meeting on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Beirut, 30 April 2015)

### Background note

As the deadline for achieving the MDGs draws near, the ongoing process of the new UN-led Development Agenda constitutes an important opportunity for different stakeholders in the Arab region to identify the future development framework and express the needs and aspirations of Arab people to achieve inclusive and integrated development.

At the same time, the Arab region continues to face multiple global economic, social and political challenges. These include various forms of inequalities, food insecurity, environmental degradation, violence and conflict, widespread corruption, decreasing role of the state and absence of the rule of law. These global challenges are compounded by specific regional challenges such as unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, increased extremism and terrorism, the negative impacts of migration and lack of freedoms, in addition to the continuous Israeli occupation of Palestine and its impact on security and on social and economic development in the region.

The inability of Arab countries to address these challenges is due in part to the liberal economic model adopted in most Arab countries as well as the continuous restructuring of the global economy and social order according to this model, aiming to expand and strengthen capital accumulation.

Moreover, the nature of the social contract in Arab states is marked by a welfare approach to political, social and economic development. Most regional economies depend on unproductive sectors which contribute little to wealth distribution and social protection. The same welfarist approach imposes critical barriers on public freedoms and on the work of civil society. This is compounded by widespread financial and administrative corruption in government institutions due to a consistent lack of accountability mechanisms.

In this context, a comprehensive vision for the region's future is required. This vision should be based on a set of economic, social, humanitarian and environmental principles, which feed into an integrated framework that is enshrined in human rights, and that links sustainable development to inclusive economic development, human security and integrated social development. In turn, this vision need to be anchored in a civil, democratic and developmental state that is founded on a new social contract based on the principles of human rights, participation, citizenship, transparency and accountability.

For these reasons, the post-2015 development agenda should not be geared only towards establishing goals and targets but should include an analytical framework for addressing the above issues and challenges, as well as means of implementation. Furthermore, the post-2015 agenda should recognize the need to adopt a new development approach that underscores the strong relationship between freedom and justice and takes into account the transition that some Arab countries are going through in light of popular movements. In this context, the new development model should be able to achieve political stability and justice; promote peace,

establish the elements of good governance, and adopt consensus-based mechanisms that can support the establishment of an active democratic political regime.

The United Nations is now working to produce a new agenda for post 2015 to follow-up on the MDGs. The new framework will be declared in an outcome document to be adopted by the international community leaders in the Summit that will be held in the UN headquarters in September 2015 as the future global development agenda.

Here, a critical question remains: Will the post-2015 agenda work where the MDGs has failed? Will the international community succeed in adopting a new development model, or will it continue with the same approach while reconciling economic growth with other positive outcomes such as poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities and inequity and ensuring environmental sustainability?

In parallel to the post-2015 agenda track, another important UN process is taking place in the context of financing for development. This process which was started in Monterrey in 2002 although independent, shares similar and interlinked agendas, and will undeniably affect any new development model. The upcoming conference on financing for development will take place in Addis Ababa in July 2015 and will discuss a paper that calls for mobilizing national resources in developing countries through: reforming national tax systems, changing consumption and production patterns, and strengthening the role of the private sector, in addition to strengthening the role of the international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the OECD in managing global financial issues and following-up on international negotiations to restructure sovereign debt. However, the paper confines the responsibility of developed countries in financing development to providing development assistance only. Consequently, the international debate ignores the importance of the global partnership for development which addresses the negative impacts of the current economic and trade model and emphasizes only few structural adjustments that were ineffective in achieving social equality and development.

Against this background and reaffirming the role of the civil society as an essential partner in any development agenda as well as in realizing peace, participation and sustainable development, the Arab NGO for Development in collaboration with ESCWA, organized a Regional Consultative Meeting on the Post-2015 Agenda in Beirut on 30 April 2015.

The meeting builds on the outcomes of two previous regional meetings held by the two organizations in 2013 and 2014 which culminated in producing two Arab civil society position papers on the Post-2015 agenda and process. This meeting aims to follow-up on emerging issues in the current international debate and update the position of Arab civil society on the post 2015 development agenda. The outcome of this meeting will be presented during the second session of the High Level Arab Forum on Sustainable Development which will be held on 5-7 May 2015 in Bahrain and during the Conference in Addis Ababa in July 2015.