

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)**

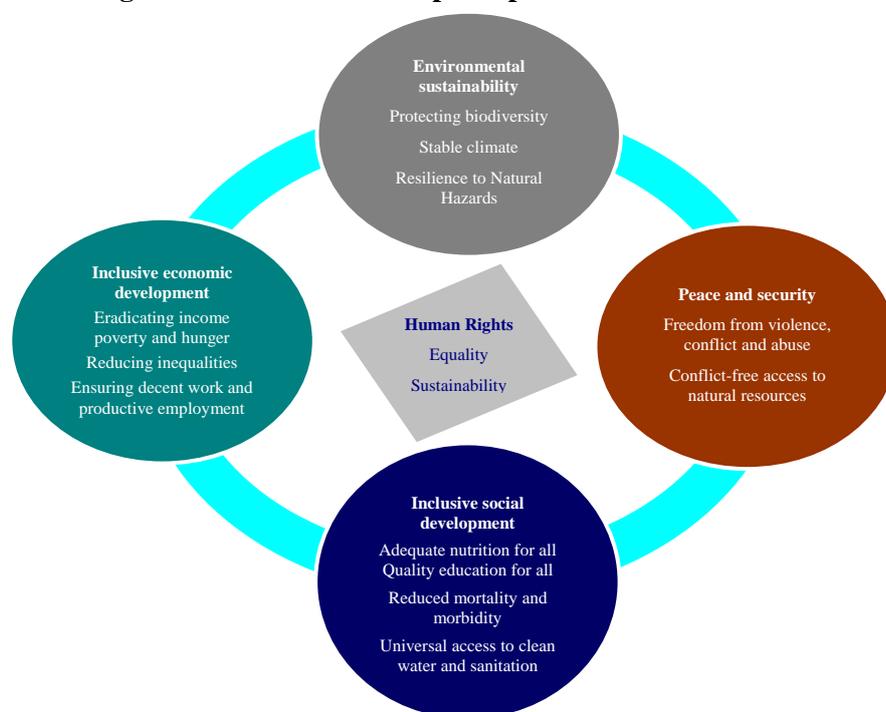
**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT BULLETIN NO. 3:  
 THE POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

**The Global Interagency Process**

As we approach the deadline for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), several global and regional initiatives have been launched to support the formulation of a global development agenda beyond 2015. The process of United Nations interagency preparations began in September 2011, when the Secretary-General requested the heads of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to establish a United Nations System Task Team (UNTT) to support system-wide efforts for the definition of a post-2015 United Nations development agenda, in consultation with all stakeholders.

The UNTT was established in January 2012 and is composed of more than 60 United Nations entities, including ESCWA and the other regional commissions. It was responsible for the publication of a path-breaking report entitled “Realizing the Future We Want for All” in June 2012. The report notes that the “central challenge of the post-2015 United Nations development agenda is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s peoples of present and future generations”.<sup>1</sup> It sets out a vision for the future based on the core values of human rights, equality and sustainability.

**Figure. The future vision: principles and framework**



Source: United Nations “Realizing the Future we Want for All”, Report to the Secretary-General, New York, June 2012, page 24.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, “Realizing the Future We Want for All”, *Report to the Secretary-General*, New York, June 2012.

The report recommends that one of the key strengths of the MDG framework, namely its agenda format based on concrete goals and targets, be retained beyond 2015, but reorganized into four key clusters: inclusive economic development, inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security (see figure).

A high degree of policy coherence will also be required at the global, regional and national levels, and a core set of “development enablers”, i.e. implementation mechanisms, should be identified to ensure “policy coherence without making the post-2015 UN development agenda a prescriptive one”.<sup>2</sup> In other words, while an overarching vision and global goals are required, the future development agenda should also leave plenty of space for regional and national adaptation.

### **A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 Agenda**

In order to inform ongoing global interagency initiatives, the five regional commissions have published a report, entitled *A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda*.<sup>3</sup> The preparation of the report was coordinated by ESCWA, in close collaboration with the other four regional Commissions.

The Report begins with a thorough overview of the socio-economic and political context in which the MDG Agenda was formulated, and includes a broad assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. It also addresses the lack of a regional dimension in the MDG Agenda and, using the example of the recent Arab uprisings, illustrates that regional solutions are required to tackle region-specific development challenges.

The Report also reviews progress in the implementation of the MDG Agenda, while paying close attention to regional and national disparities, including disparities between different social groups within a country. One key lesson for the post-2015 agenda is that, instead of focusing on the implementation of globally defined goals at an aggregate level, there is a need to place “the most vulnerable groups of people and countries at the centre of policies and programmes” to achieve the implementation of the global agenda.<sup>4</sup>

The report identifies key priority areas for a global development agenda from a regional perspective. In the process, it also highlights the critical need to adapt global goals to regional and national priorities. It examines different regional perspectives against the background of key global development challenges, grouped together into four clusters: economic sustainability, social sustainability, environmental sustainability, and governance and institutions (see table). While the table reveals many common priorities between different regions, the report also calls for “a nuanced approach that addresses regional specificities within the global development agenda”.<sup>5</sup>

The Report concludes by identifying the following four key messages designed to inform the global debate: (1) employment generation must be at the centre of the post-2015 agenda; (2) more effective approaches are required to tackle inequality; (3) a more comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability is needed; and (4) democratic governance should be incorporated effectively into the post-2015 debate.

The Report stresses that a new United Nations development agenda must recognize the critical importance of productive employment by making it a goal in its own right, with separate targets for the various dimensions of employment, including youth employment and social protection. Similarly, a post-2015 agenda should consider moving beyond income poverty towards multidimensional approaches to the

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, “Realizing the Future We Want for All”, *Report to the Secretary-General*, New York, June 2012.

<sup>3</sup> ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, *A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda*, ESCWA, Beirut, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

reduction of poverty and socio-economic inequalities, at both the national and international levels. The Report also emphasizes that future environmental sustainability goals and targets should be comprehensive, and seek to tackle critical challenges such as climate change, land degradation, the unsustainable use of natural resources and ocean acidification.

TABLE. REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

	Economic sustainability	Social sustainability	Environmental sustainability	Governance and institutions
Africa	Economic growth and transformation; poverty reduction; employment, especially youth employment; food security; trade, investment and technology; income inequality.	Education; health; gender equality and women's empowerment; social protection.	Climate change; disaster risk reduction; desertification; biodiversity; urbanization.	Democracy and the rule of law; effective institutions; conflict resolution and citizen security; global governance.
Latin America and the Caribbean	Economic growth and diversification; employment; trade, investment and technology; income inequality.	Education; health; gender equality and women's empowerment; social protection.	Climate change; biodiversity; disaster risk reduction; urbanization.	Democracy and the rule of law; effective institutions; armed violence and citizen security; global governance.
Asia and the Pacific	Economic growth; poverty reduction; employment; food security; trade, investment and technology; income inequality.	Education; health; gender equality and women's empowerment; social protection.	Climate change; disaster risk reduction; biodiversity; urbanization.	Democracy and the rule of law; effective institutions; citizen security; global governance.
Western Asia*	Inclusive growth and diversification; adequate mapping and reduction of poverty; employment, especially youth and women's employment; trade, investment and technology; regional cooperation and integration.	Education; health; gender equality and women's empowerment; social protection; social justice.	Climate change; water and food security; desertification; urbanization.	Democracy and the rule of law; effective institutions; rights and freedoms; conflict resolution and self-determination; global and regional governance.
Europe and Central Asia	Full employment; reduction of the informal sector; income and wealth inequality; regional cooperation and economic integration.	Education; health; gender equality; social protection; equitable pension systems.	Climate change; disaster risk reduction; biodiversity; food security; urbanization.	Democracy, free press and the rule of law; effective institutions; citizen security; global governance.

Source: ECA/ECE, ECIAC, ESCAP and ESCWA: A regional perspective on the post 2015 UN Development agenda ESCWA, Beirut, 2013.

\* Western Asia here is used to refer to the 17 member countries of ESCWA.

Last but not least, the report calls for the effective incorporation of democratic governance into the future development agenda. This will require an in-depth global (and regional) debate on how this can be accomplished, with options ranging from the formulation of non-binding democratic principles that can be applied to a variety of goals, to the identification of a democratic governance goal. By way of illustration, the Report notes how the expansion of the European Union and the founding of the African Union have encouraged democratic governance among their members. It further acknowledges the new governance challenges being tackled by Arab countries undergoing transitions toward democracy.



### **ESCWA's Regional Consultation with Civil Society Coalitions**

In close collaboration with the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), ESCWA's Social Development Division held a regional civil society consultation on the post-2015 United Nations development agenda in March 2013. The meeting was attended by representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen.

The meeting consisted of three main sessions which sought to identify: (1) CSO perspectives on regional priorities for the post-2015 agenda; (2) ways in which CSOs in the region could contribute to the development of that agenda; and (3) ways in which CSOs could better coordinate with ESCWA and other United Nations partners in the post-2015 development process.

The main outcome of the meeting was a Declaration on the post-2015 framework, including a number of actionable recommendations set forth by Arab CSOs. These recommendations encompass a new citizen-centered development paradigm that respects political, social, cultural, environmental and economic rights; seeks to end all forms of exclusion; and works to ensure equity and social justice. Particular attention is placed on the need to build a participatory platform for the regional development agenda, in light of increased demands by citizens for freedom, justice and greater political participation.

Most of the countries in the Arab region face multidimensional challenges, including the need to transition from a rentier model of governance toward a democratic and productive state. This can only happen if governance is based on respect for human rights, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, integrity and responsibility. Such a transition must take into account the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and focus on citizen empowerment; it further necessitates a new social contract that promotes participation and the just redistribution of wealth, generates decent jobs, and provides comprehensive, high-quality public services.

The Declaration also identifies a number of thematic priorities, which can be organized under the headings of politics, society and the economy.

### Political priorities

- The ending of occupation and promotion of the right to self-determination as a prelude to development
- The promotion of freedom and the rights of individuals and of nations to realize their aspirations and potential
- The promotion of participatory frameworks of governance
- The clarifying and upholding of the rights of refugees and displaced people

### Social priorities

- A focus on equity, distribution and social justice rather than just poverty reduction
- The maintenance of social cohesion, particularly in transition countries, through the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms
- Addressing the deficits in knowledge required to empower citizens and move from quantitative to qualitative measures of education
- Addressing gender inequality within the transformation of the development model itself

### Economic priorities

- Fair and participatory global economic governance and development-oriented global trading systems
- A right to policy space for developing countries to stimulate their economies and generate employment
- A clear and solid commitment to ensure sources of finance for development
- Addressing the specific needs and conditions of the least developed countries

These sets of priorities are ultimately designed to ensure that key regional development challenges are properly reflected in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda.