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High-level political forum on sustainable developmentConvened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council
26 June-8 July 2015**Report of the second session of the Arab High-level Forum
on Sustainable Development to the high-level political
forum on sustainable development****Summary*

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the United Nations Environment Programme, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, convened the second session of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development from 5 to 7 May 2015 in Manama. The Forum was hosted by the Government of Bahrain under the patronage of the Prime Minister, Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. The meeting brought together high-level government representatives concerned with sustainable development from the economic, social, environment, technology and planning sectors. Participants also included representatives of United Nations agencies, Arab development banks, the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies, civil society organizations, universities and research institutions, parliaments, media and the private sector.

The Forum supported regional preparations for the session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in New York from 26 June to 8 July 2015. Taking stock of the global processes leading to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals, the Forum aimed to (a) exchange perspectives on the status of sustainable development and the main implementation challenges in the Arab region; (b) increase knowledge of financing for sustainable development and other means of implementation, including trade, technology and capacity-building; and (c) engage participants in a dialogue on future steps for monitoring and evaluation of the sustainable development goals and the institutional frameworks required for adequate planning, implementation, review and reporting at the national and regional levels.

The Forum resulted in the Bahrain Document, which summarizes key messages emanating from the discussions. The Bahrain Document and the present report of the Forum will be presented as the regional input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

* The annexes to the present document are being circulated in the language of submission only.



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I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), convened the second session of the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development from 5 to 7 May 2015 in Manama. The Forum was hosted by the Government of Bahrain under the patronage of the Prime Minister of Bahrain, Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa.

2. The Forum supported the regional preparations for the session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in New York from 26 June to 8 July 2015. Taking stock of the global processes leading to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals, the Forum aimed to:

(a) Exchange perspectives on the status of sustainable development and the main implementation challenges in the Arab region;

(b) Increase knowledge on financing for sustainable development and other means of implementation including trade, technology and capacity-building;

(c) Engage participants in a dialogue on future steps for monitoring and evaluation of the sustainable development goals and the institutional frameworks required for adequate planning, implementation, review and reporting at the national and regional levels.

3. Discussions were informed by the technical summary of the *Arab Sustainable Development Report* (prototype edition 2015), a series of regional expert reports and issues briefs and a set of national assessments of sustainable development in selected Arab countries. The documentation of the Forum is available on the Forum web page at <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=3572E>.

4. The meeting was organized in seven main sessions in addition to the opening and closing sessions. The detailed agenda is contained in annex I. A series of eight side events were also organized by United Nations agencies which are members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, in partnership with various regional organizations. They served to highlight sectoral issues mainstreamed into the sustainable development goals and relevant implementation issues. A summary of the discussions that took place during those side events is contained in annex II.

5. The Forum was attended by around 360 participants, including high-level government representatives from 18 Arab States. Participants also included representatives of United Nations agencies, the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies, Arab development banks, civil society organizations, universities and research institutions, parliaments, media and the private sector. The full list of participants is provided in annex III.

6. The Forum resulted in the Bahrain Document, which includes key messages emanating from the Forum as detailed in section II of the present report. Section III summarizes the discussions that took place during the plenary sessions. The list of documents and evaluation of the Forum are presented as annexes IV and V respectively.

II. Key messages: the Bahrain Document

7. The Bahrain Document was issued at the end of the Forum and was presented by Mohammed Ahmed Al Amer, President of the Central Informatics Organization of Bahrain, on behalf of the Government of Bahrain. The document provides recommendations to be adopted as part of a comprehensive and transformative approach to sustainable development that enables the region to implement the envisaged sustainable development goals in accordance with its own priorities.

8. The 19 messages included in the Bahrain Document are the following:

(a) Emphasizing the voluntary, universal and holistic nature of the post-2015 development agenda in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, as well as emphasizing the importance of an enabling global environment in supporting the efforts of Arab States to implement the sustainable development goals, while according full respect to national sovereignty and the diversity of religious, ethical, cultural and social values, and all human rights, including the right to development, and promoting the principles of good governance;

(b) Recognizing that the eradication of poverty in all its forms is the greatest global challenge hindering the achievement of sustainable development, and noting that poverty rates have increased in some Arab States, which requires the mobilization of all national, regional and international efforts to deal with poverty within the framework of the global partnership for sustainable development. One of the most important supporting elements in this regard is to advance a transformative, people-centred development approach that respects and takes account of national specificities and integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development;

(c) Reiterating that the Arab States are intent on ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab lands, working with the international community to achieve peace, security and inclusive sustainable development in the Arab region;

(d) Emphasizing the importance of stability for achieving sustainable development, given increasing levels of extremism, terrorism and conflict in the region, with the consequent deterioration in the humanitarian situation, forced displacement and the increase in numbers of refugees in the Arab region;

(e) Underscoring the need for the international community to shoulder its responsibility towards refugee-hosting States, and provide the support needed to enable these States to sustain their development gains and provide support to the refugees. Indeed, the issue of refugees has become a major challenge to host countries, putting pressures on their natural resources and straining their budgets, therefore rendering them inadequate for achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions;

(f) Highlighting the need to expand participation of all societal groups in the development process in order to promote the social contract between citizen and State and enhance the participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the displaced, refugees and people in vulnerable situations, in an effort to promote social justice and sustainable development;

(g) Underscoring the essential role played by all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, in supporting government efforts and implementing sustainable development policies, within the context of promoting principles of transparency, accountability and community participation, and strengthening legislative structures to become conducive to community participation, all within a framework of respect for national sovereignty;

(h) Adopting sustainable development strategies that improve the performance of institutions and their active engagement in the development process, while giving priority to combating corruption, improving governance and developing working mechanisms that are compatible with the sustainable development goals;

(i) Promoting practices of efficient management of natural resources; thus enabling present and future generations to access these essential elements of sustainable development;

(j) Emphasizing the challenges facing the region with respect to water scarcity, agricultural land degradation and desertification, all of which pose a serious threat to development, as well as to food and water security; while underlining the importance of adopting sustainable consumption and production patterns, through the transfer and indigenization of appropriate green technologies, the provision of adequate funding and capacity-building to achieve water, energy and food security, and building on the best practices and success stories in the Arab region;

(k) Underscoring the importance of harnessing technology for development, addressing the widening technological gap and the growing capacity development needs with regard to implementation of sustainable development programmes in the Arab States; all of which requires formulating national scientific research and technology policies, improving the quality of education and building a knowledge society, raising levels of investment in research and development and innovation, promoting regional cooperation, supporting the establishment of an international mechanism for facilitating the development, transfer and diffusion of environmentally sound and clean technology to developing countries, and reconsidering the current forms of cooperation in technology transfer, indigenization and financing, including North-South partnerships;

(l) Maintaining efforts aimed at formulating and adopting macroeconomic policies designed for reducing unemployment, creating decent jobs for all, including young people, women, and immigrants, by enhancing efforts in matching educational skills to the requirements of labour markets, in addition to enhancing the flexibility of these markets' requirements in countries facing such problems, reforming employment services in the public sector, and encouraging the participation of women;

(m) Underlining the role of financial institutions and donors in integrating sustainable development principles in financial operations, as well as in adopting an integrated approach involving various funding options, whether public or private, national or international, traditional or innovative; and raising national resource mobilization efficiency by addressing tax evasion, widening the tax base, reforming the subsidy system, and combating illegal capital flows; in addition to examining

ways for promoting the mobilization of financial resources, including innovative financing, and supporting developing countries to ensure debt sustainability;

(n) Emphasizing the need to enhance Arab economic integration and adopt an approach that integrates development and trade policies, backed by effective institutions that incorporate coordination mechanisms and participatory processes; as well as underscoring the need for ensuring that free-trade agreements, including the Arab Customs Union, impact positively on the three dimensions of sustainable development; and underlining the importance of reforming the global trading system and ensuring effective participation by all Arab countries, particularly the least developed;

(o) Emphasizing the importance of formulating evidence-based sustainable development policies, which in turn, requires strengthening national statistical systems and their data collection capabilities, improving quality and transparency of information, and issuing regular reports on sustainable development indicators at both the international and the regional levels;

(p) The green economy is one of the means for achieving sustainable development and contributes to the diversification of economic activities and building Arab expertise in this field through international cooperation in technology transfer and financing;

(q) Taking note of the increased frequency of natural hazards, in particular desertification, and the exacerbation of their impact, which necessitate the development of early warning systems, the adoption of measures to manage risk and build resilience, and an integrated approach that achieves sustainability by avoiding exposure to new risks, minimizing current risks and working towards sustainable urban development;

(r) Emphasizing the Arab Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development and inviting Arab States to work towards establishing sustainable development institutional frameworks;

(s) Emphasizing the need to maintain support to the efforts of the Arab Group in New York to reflect Arab development priorities in the two intergovernmental negotiation tracks relating to financing for development and the post-2015 development agenda; in particular with regard to the Arab Group's view on the relationship between the two tracks and the need to agree on independent governmental arrangements for following up on international commitments relating to financing for development; as well as supporting the Arab Group's position regarding the need for the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda to address the functions and operating procedures of the high-level political forum, notably its role in reviewing and following up on the implementation of the development agenda commitments.

III. Summary of plenary sessions

A. Opening session

9. The opening session included statements by the Forum organizers. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Social Development, spoke on behalf of Bahrain. She

welcomed the participants to the meeting, which she hoped would ensure that Arab priorities were reflected in the post-2015 development agenda, building on previous efforts by the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers. Ms. Saleh highlighted the progress made by Bahrain in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the prize awarded to the Prime Minister in acknowledgment of his achievements in the area of urban development, housing and the Millennium Development Goals.

10. Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, thanked the Prime Minister of Bahrain for the generous hosting of the event. She stressed that sustainable development was the only path to achieving strong economies, safe and stable societies and healthy environments. However, that required human and financial resources, effective institutions, equal citizenship, good governance and respect for the human rights of all. Ms. Khalaf noted that despite the progress achieved in the region, the occupation of the State of Palestine persisted and there were alarming trends that seriously threatened the achievement of sustainable development, notably, increases in armed sectarian conflicts, extremism and terrorism, the numbers of refugees and forced migrants, youth unemployment and poverty. Long years, important efforts and large financial resources were needed to rebuild what had been destroyed and restore social cohesion. Arab and international solidarity were therefore needed, as well as a comprehensive plan to bring the region out of its current ordeals. Ms. Khalaf closed her statement by calling on participants to benefit from the Forum as an opportunity to develop a clear regional perspective that could be conveyed to the global process for the post-2015 development agenda.

11. Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Tuwaijri, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, LAS, stressed that the transition to the post-2015 development agenda would require an integrated and coherent implementation approach and adequate means of implementation, pointing to the positive role that Arab integration could play in that regard. He noted that an effective institutional framework at the regional level was also required to address emerging challenges, and that the Forum was well positioned to play an important role within that framework. He referred in particular to the resolution of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment related to the organization of the Forum and the preparation of an Arab sustainable development report. Mr. Al-Tuwaijri concluded with highlights of LAS efforts in preparation for the post-2015 development agenda.

12. Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, highlighted the unprecedented pace of change that the world and the Arab region were undergoing in terms of material abundance. That abundance had, unfortunately, come at the expense of the environment. He stressed the urgent need for a more integrated way of doing business and for turning environmental challenges into economically sound options. Important enablers of the transformation needed were technology, data and finance, and UNEP had launched initiatives to address all three. Mr. Thiaw pointed to the need for both public and private funding to realize a low-carbon transition, stressing that the global financial system would need to be reshaped to fit the needs of sustainable development financing. He concluded with a call to the Arab region to benefit from its extraordinary resources and opportunities to meet the challenge and transition to an inclusive sustainable economy.

13. Sima Bahous, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), noted that the post-

2015 development agenda provided an opportunity to review the previous shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals framework. Ms. Bahous indicated that the new agenda promised to address three important shortcomings. The first related to environmental sustainability and its linkage to socioeconomic development. The second related to data availability, and she noted that the Arab region was in dire need of disaggregated data to ensure that the most vulnerable were benefiting from development efforts. The third aspect related to flexibility in adopting national targets that reflected domestic particularities. Ms. Bahous concluded with the need to focus development efforts to resolve the root causes of conflict in the Arab region, a mission that UNDP would attempt relentlessly to achieve.

B. Session 1. From Millennium Development Goals to sustainable development goals: voices from the Arab region

14. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Social Development, Bahrain, introduced the first session and emphasized the need to establish the right to development and self-determination, to protect human dignity and to achieve human security in the Arab region.

15. Roula Majdalani, Director of the Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA, detailed some highlights of the status of sustainable development in the Arab region, stating that remarkable improvements had taken place over the past two decades. However, progress was unequally distributed within and between countries, and in some Arab countries it was fragile and unsustainable. Protracted conflicts and occupation continued to prevent sustainable development in the Arab region, and several challenges persisted, including poverty and exacerbated inequality; the low participation of women in the labour market; water and energy insecurity; and an alarming number of refugees and internally displaced people. The Arab region faced severe resource constraints, and the financing gap was estimated by ESCWA to be of the order of \$85 billion for the period 2015-2016. In the prototype edition of the *Arab Sustainable Development Report*, it was suggested that the region had two possible pathways: one was to maintain the same unsustainable development paradigm, and the second involved a rethinking of the development paradigm to ensure human dignity and the rights of current and future generations.

16. Marwan Muasher, Vice-President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, stressed peace and stability as prerequisites for sustainable development in the Arab region. He noted that the relative stability enjoyed by some countries of the region was artificial and fragile, since true stability could be achieved only when people felt that they were partners in decision-making and that their needs were met. Mr. Muasher referred to three alarm bells that the region had missed: regional outlooks as presented in United Nations reports, the Arab uprisings and the rise of extremist groups. He stressed a number of transformations that were needed. The first involved a gradual shift away from a rentier economy into a more productive and diversified economy that created employment and addressed poverty. The second required political reforms to go hand in hand with economic reforms, including the establishment of an effective system of checks and balances. A third change related to the need to enhance societal participation in the formulation of development plans that addressed structural problems, such as

unemployment, budget deficits and public debt. Finally, Mr. Muasher pointed to the dire need to reform the education system, which had so far generated a frustrated youth. The focus must be on issues of quality, while aiming to develop critical thinking and accountability values.

17. Fateh Azzam, Director, Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut, made an intervention on the right to development and human dignity: a paradigm shift. He highlighted the linkage between peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, noting that development policies in the region had benefited narrow segments of society and marginalized others. Mr. Azzam proposed that a human rights-based approach — an approach that had received broad consensus internationally — offered a new paradigm for pursuing sustainable development in the Arab region and was the best guarantor of social harmony and political peace. Such an approach relied on four pillars: (a) the participation, inclusion and empowerment of all segments of society to develop, implement and evaluate development policies; (b) respect for human rights standards for economic security and sustainable economic development, including the rights to work, health, housing and education; (c) the accountability of all development actors, notably Governments, but also civil society; and (d) a focus on people in vulnerable situations, notably women, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless and migrant workers. Mr. Azzam concluded that it was now clear that peace in the Arab region could not be achieved without development and respect for human dignity and human rights. That in turn required a radical change in the relationship between the citizen and the State towards one of partnership, pluralism, participation, equality and respect for human rights.

Summary of discussions

18. During the ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

(a) A special reference was made to the occupation of the State of Palestine, which was hindering the achievement of sustainable development. Indeed, the State of Palestine lacked sovereignty over its natural resources, and Israel continued to appropriate water and land illegally. Furthermore, Palestine did not control its electricity infrastructure or its national borders and Palestinians were being forced to leave their lands and live in extreme poverty because of the separation barrier. It was important to document those grievances to allow the State of Palestine to file a case with the International Criminal Court and request compensation;

(b) Participants emphasized the need to end occupation and conflicts, noting that the establishment of peace required reconciliation and goodwill. It was also pointed out that the issue of occupation was not sufficiently emphasized within the proposal on the sustainable development goals;

(c) Respect for human rights was important, as was respect for Arab and Islamic religious, ethical, cultural and social values. There was a need to consider the cultural dimension under the sustainable development goals;

(d) Accountability was anchored foremost at the national level and needed to be institutionalized through national laws, regulations and institutions. The international community had an active role to play in combating corruption and illicit financial flows;

(e) The influx of Syrian refugees had been a major challenge affecting the economies of host countries (notably Jordan and Lebanon). Jordan estimated that \$3 billion was needed to satisfy the needs of displaced people. In addition, terrorism was a major challenge facing the Arab region, as it depleted the resources of Arab countries and their ability to pursue a sustainable future;

(f) Creating jobs for the unemployed youth was critical to achieving stability, as well as the promotion of citizenship and the consideration of women's rights;

(g) The inclusion of persons with disabilities in all areas of sustainable development should be a priority in the Arab region, notably in view of the rising percentage of disabilities associated with armed conflicts. A human rights-based approach to disability must be adopted according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which most Arab countries had ratified;

(h) A question was raised regarding the classification of countries in the *Arab Sustainable Development Report*, noting that it was based on both geography and the level of economic development.

C. Session 2. Global processes leading to the post-2015 development agenda

19. The second session of the Forum focused on the global processes leading to the post-2015 development agenda. The session was moderated by Taher Al-Shakhshir, Minister of Environment and Deputy Chair of the Higher Committee for Sustainable Development of Jordan, who stressed the importance of the Forum and pointed to the global responsibility to protect the environment.

20. Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, highlighted the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction that had been adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 recognized disaster risk reduction as part of sustainable development. It also recognized the need to improve governance for prevention, adaptation and preparedness. Measures included building improved structures after disasters and planning for future disasters, as well as recognizing climate change as a cause of disasters. The framework covered natural disasters, biohazards, technological disasters and health disasters, including long-onset droughts and drylands. It advocated the participation of civil society and the private sector and established measurable targets in line with the sustainable development goals.

21. Marion Barthélémy, Chief of the Intergovernmental Support and Inter-agency Branch of the Division of Sustainable Development of the United Nations, reflected on the process leading up to the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York. The vision behind the sustainable development goals was to eradicate poverty while balancing the three pillars of sustainable development. The sustainable development goals would address the shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals by expanding the concept of development and aiming at improved governance and promoting peace (Goal 16), as well as by integrating targets on means of

implementation in all the sustainable development goals, in addition to Goal 17, which dealt specifically with implementation. The post-2015 development agenda was universal and, at the same time, allowed each Government to set its own national targets. The outcomes expected from the summit were a political declaration, 17 sustainable development goals with 169 targets, a means of implementation and a review framework. For the successful implementation of the sustainable development goals, a strong outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July, was needed.

22. Ayman Shasly, international policies consultant, Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals of Saudi Arabia, updated participants on the status of climate change negotiations, stressing the importance of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in November and December 2015, in establishing a binding international climate action agreement. He emphasized that the climate change discussion had moved from commitments on emissions mitigation to “intended nationally determined contributions” applicable to all countries. Mr. Shasly specified that those contributions should target adaptation, reflect national circumstances and capabilities and be defined at the project and activity level.

23. Iyad Abumoghli, Regional Director and Representative, UNEP Regional Office for West Asia, noted that two key aspects differentiated the post-2015 development agenda from previous development agendas, namely, universality and integration. Universality reflected the fact that the sustainable development goals were applicable to all countries and all peoples and that their implementation entailed concerted global cooperation. Integration, on the other hand, was based on three principles, namely: (a) leave no one behind and provide a life of dignity for all, through environmentally sound practices and technologies; (b) achieve greater prosperity in an inclusive manner, within the capacity of the earth’s life support system; and (c) increase natural, social and economic capital to achieve greater resilience and secure the livelihoods of future generations. Mr. Abumoghli cited concrete examples and cases from the Arab region of an integrated approach to sustainable development. He concluded with a call to the Arab countries to reform their institutions to become fit for purpose and provide incentives to the different sectors to come together.

24. Roberto Bissio, Executive Director of the Third World Institute, stated that inequalities were the key aspect hampering the achievement of sustainable development. In many countries, despite economic growth, there had been little progress on social aspects, as evidenced by the basic capabilities index, which had grown by only 10 per cent over the past two decades. Rich countries had special responsibilities for reducing inequalities, improving the sustainability of their consumption and production patterns and meeting their commitments to the means of implementation. Free and quality education, labour rights, fair tax policies and the right to social security were needed to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, effective monitoring and accountability were crucial for developed countries, donors and developing countries alike. Mr. Bissio called for a carefully balanced mechanism, such as the universal periodic review of human rights, where all countries were held accountable.

Summary of discussions

25. During the ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

(a) The emergency in Gaza in 2014 was a man-made disaster. Destruction as a result of occupation and conflicts should also be considered in the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework and in indicators for the sustainable development goals, since it hampered the achievement of sustainable development. Overall, the issue of human security was not sufficiently addressed in the framework. While conflict and occupation had been discussed at Sendai, they were not included in the framework; however, it referred to man-made disasters and thus offered the possibility of addressing broader issues;

(b) Several Arab countries had made progress in promoting renewable energy, with examples cited from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. However, the high cost of renewable energy remained an issue;

(c) There was a need for an Arab regional mechanism for disaster prevention, as well as capacity-building to predict disasters and deal with their consequences, given that the Sendai Framework encompassed capacity-building at regional and national levels;

(d) The concept of human security had not been adequately addressed in the sustainable development goals.

D. Session 3. Means of implementation: financing for sustainable development in the Arab region

26. The third session of the Forum was moderated by Naglaa El-Ehwani, Minister of International Cooperation, Egypt, who highlighted the importance of financing, since there could not be development without adequate resources.

27. Mohamed Mokhtar El-Hacene, Director of the Economic Development and Integration Division of ESCWA, pointed to the immediate need to rebuild the capital stock lost owing to crises in the region, while working towards achieving the sustainable development goals by 2030. Globally, financing needs for sustainable development were large, and estimates suggested that up to \$2.5 trillion was needed annually. Consequently, conventional methods of financing such as official development assistance (ODA) were not enough. An integrated approach encompassing different financing options, complemented by regional and international support, was essential for the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the horizon of 2030. The public sector needed to be more efficient at resource mobilization by tackling tax evasion and illicit capital flows. In addition, widening the tax base, carrying out subsidy reforms, particularly in the energy sector, and enhancing trade could also contribute to domestic resource mobilization.

28. Tamer Mostafa, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations in New York, stressed the importance of having a common Arab position on financing for development. The zero draft of the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development was reviewed by the participants at the meeting of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development in the Countries of

the ESCWA Region, held in Amman on 7 and 8 April 2015. Among a number of issues, participants called for reconsidering ODA separately from climate finance and humanitarian aid, owing to the special context of the crisis witnessed in the region. Moreover, Mr. Mostafa reiterated the position of Arab negotiators in New York that the conference in Addis Ababa would deal with “financing for development”, not “financing for sustainable development”. That was particularly important, as the region was undergoing several crises and fighting the persistent challenges of poverty, undernourishment and child stunting, as well as several other development challenges. However, the untapped potential of innovative financing for sustainable development should be unlocked in the Arab region.

29. Sherif Arif, senior environment and water consultant, presented the elements of a strategic investment framework for the green economy in the Arab region that was being prepared by ESCWA. The framework focused specifically on the energy sector, given its importance as a natural non-renewable asset and its impact on health and carbon emissions. Mr. Arif explained the trade-off that Governments faced between sustaining economic growth and creating jobs, on the one hand, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, on the other. He noted that specialized multilateral and bilateral financing institutions could manage such trade-offs and provide incentives for financing green investments. However, Arab countries had not benefited much from those financing streams. The Green Climate Fund had established an important readiness programme to provide technical assistance to countries, and the region needed to benefit from it.

30. Wafik Grais, expert economist and financial adviser, presented green *sukuks* as Sharia-compliant mechanisms for financing sustainable development that were asset-based and combined features of both equities and bonds. The distinctive feature of green *sukuks* was that they could attract the interest of a broad set of investors, encompassing socially responsible and sharia-focused investors. In addition, *sukuks* were a flexible financial instrument, as their structure could be calibrated to a variety of needs, depending on the project at hand. *Sukuks* were by now a mature market that had been effective for resource mobilization internationally and in the Arab region. Private financing was available in the region and beyond; however, it was likely to need credit enhancement, owing to the high risks in green investment markets. With well-designed financing structures and credit enhancement schemes, as developed elsewhere, green *sukuks* could offer an important alternative market for financing sustainable development in the Arab region.

31. Steven Stone, Chief of the Economics and Trade Branch of UNEP, explained that global economic success over the past decades had come at the expense of a growing ecological footprint. As a result, the world had crossed a number of planetary boundaries. That reflected a misalignment between markets and sustainability policies. The rules of the game must be changed in favour of projects that supported sustainable development. Mr. Stone explained that new ways to define success were also needed, as it could not be measured in economic terms alone. On the positive side, new institutions were being created and existing institutions reformed to deliver sustainability, and the Arab countries must tap into them. Mr. Stone presented the UNEP finance initiative, which aimed to shape the sustainable finance agenda and create the capacity to embed environmental and social concerns in the financial sector.

Summary of discussions

32. During the ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

(a) As indicated in the concluding recommendations issued by civil society organizations meeting at the Arab regional consultation on the post-2015 agenda, organized by the Arab NGO Network for Development held in Beirut on 30 April 2015, there was a need for global responsibility to effect change. The present content of the zero draft of the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development raised concerns for the region. In particular, the negotiation process should consider “common but differentiated responsibility” in designing the financing mechanisms for a new global partnership;

(b) Participants stressed the importance of reforms to the international financial architecture. Negotiations on the draft of the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development needed to be more inclusive and participatory, and Arab countries should have strong representation, so that the decisions taken were reflective of the concerns of the Arab region;

(c) Since the fiscal space for financing sustainable development was limited in most Arab countries, it would be crucial for developed countries to renew their commitment to the global partnership. Historically, the developed countries had fallen short of their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) to developing countries as ODA, as required within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. Developed countries should consider increasing their contribution to ODA from 0.7 per cent of GNI to 1 per cent.

E. Session 4A. Means of implementation: trade for sustainable development in the Arab region

33. The fourth session was held on two parallel tracks, covering trade and technology, respectively. In session 4A, trade for sustainable development in the Arab region was discussed, with Mohammed Ahmad Al Amer, President, Central Informatics Organization, Bahrain, as moderator.

34. Hilda Al-Hinai, Deputy Permanent Representative of Oman to the World Trade Organization (WTO), explained the challenges that had prevented trade from achieving its development potential in the Arab region. Among the challenges was a clear lack of integration between trade policies and other economic policies in the Arab countries. Institutions were ineffective at handling issues related to intellectual property rights, standards and environmental regulations. Moreover, the lack of coordination between national actors and inadequate human capacities had impeded the development of a strong and sound Arab position in WTO negotiations. Arab countries had not benefited adequately from aid-for-trade programmes and activities. Ms. Al-Hinai proposed a number of solutions, including support for small and medium-sized enterprises and building the capacity of parliamentarians, academics and the media in trade issues. She suggested that ESCWA and LAS organize an annual meeting to allow Arab delegations in Geneva to exchange views and develop a common understanding of trade negotiations.

35. Mohammed Abdelssamad El-Hamraoui, Chief of the Division of Relations with the Arab and Islamic World and the Countries of Africa and Asia, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Morocco, pointed to the revival of the concept of regional

integration as a way of facing economic challenges. The Arab experience in regional integration was mainly embodied in the establishment of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and efforts to create an Arab customs union and a joint Arab market. A review of trade statistics over the past few years revealed that inter-Arab trade exchanges had remained weak, owing to a number of factors, notably weak and similar economic structures in most Arab countries. Negotiations between Arab countries on the detailed rules on the origin and free trade in services were continuing and were facing tough times, while negotiations on an Arab customs union had been postponed until further notice. A similar fate awaited the planned Arab common market negotiations. As a result, Arab countries contributed at present a very modest share of the volume of the global trade in goods and services.

36. In contrast, Mr. El-Hacene expressed optimism regarding the perspective of an Arab customs union. Such a union, once established, would constitute the natural second step after the Greater Arab Free Trade Area towards the desired Arab economic union. Mr. El-Hacene highlighted the need for technical studies to assess the impact of the planned Arab customs union on the economies of Arab States. In particular, studies were needed to analyse the specificities of each Arab economy and examine its trade ties to other countries and regional and international groupings. A number of reports were being prepared by ESCWA to study the challenges and opportunities associated with the establishment of the Arab customs union and determine the necessary macroeconomic and sectoral policies.

Summary of discussions

37. During the ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

- (a) Arab countries needed to assess and explore the potential of mutually beneficial intra-Arab trade and tap into it;
- (b) There was an interest in further understanding the obstacles to trade liberalization in the Arab region and the way forward for economic integration through an Arab customs union;
- (c) Deep and comprehensive free-trade agreements between the European Union and four Arab countries, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, provided a good example of the pressing capacity-building needs in terms of economic analysis and assessments;
- (d) The interlinkages between trade liberalization and investment attractiveness were highlighted, with the Moroccan experience in establishing free-trade agreements with its European economic partners providing important lessons in that regard.

F. Session 4B. Means of implementation: technology for sustainable development in the Arab region

38. In session 4B, the role of technology as an important means of achieving sustainable development in the Arab region was discussed. It was moderated by Mohammed Ali Al-Qaed, Chief Executive Officer of the e-Government Authority of Bahrain.

39. Haidar Fraihat, Director of the Technology for Development Division of ESCWA, gave a presentation on mainstreaming technology into sustainable development in general and the sustainable development goals in particular. Starting from a brief overview of the post-2015 process, Mr. Fraihat explained that the technology footprint in the new agenda differed significantly from previous development agendas, notably the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, the proposed sustainable development goals included 10 explicit technology/research-related targets under 7 of the 17 goals. From an examination of those targets, three objectives could be deduced, namely: (a) promotion of the role of research, development and innovation and the transfer of technology for improving productivity, diversification of the economy and the creation of new job opportunities; (b) use of technology as a means of implementation of the sustainable development goals; and (c) increasing access to green technologies. Mr. Fraihat concluded with a set of recommendations and provided highlights of the role of ESCWA in the region in advancing technology.

40. Odeh Al-Jayyousi, Partner and Board Member, Sustainable Development Professionals Inc., spoke about the role of technology in development in the Arab region. He pinpointed the knowledge divide as a main contributor to the inequalities between countries, noting that the Arab countries had the potential to “leapfrog” and reach advanced levels. Science and innovation had a new role: to serve societal needs and national priorities; hence the need to open channels of dialogue between innovators, Governments and the private sector. Mr. Al-Jayyousi highlighted the role of technology in the water-energy-food nexus, giving practical examples. Given the current gaps in the science, technology and innovation system in the Arab region, partnerships between research institutes and regional integration were paramount, as was reversing the brain drain.

41. Khalil Hamdani, Visiting Professor at the Lahore School of Economics, addressed the topic of investment in technology. He noted that implementation of the sustainable development goals would require significant investment, well beyond current levels, especially in the Arab region. That would not be possible unless new technologies were able to reach larger populations at lower cost, new business models were adopted to encourage private investment in social sectors and partnerships were strengthened. The private sector had the funds but lacked opportunities; hence the need to create an enabling environment and a national innovation system that balanced the three important components of policy, science and enterprise. Mr. Hamdani stressed the different types of linkages that needed to be fostered through investments in people and infrastructure, namely, foreign direct investment, linkages with technology partners, forward linkages with customers, participation in global supply chains and backward linkages with suppliers.

Summary of discussions

42. During the ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

(a) An Arab science, technology and innovation strategy had yet to be developed and translated into joint projects in the Arab countries. Current hurdles, which included a low level of human capacity, were best addressed through intraregional cooperation. Investment in research and development needed to increase according to clear national strategies. Information and communications

technology (ICT) had yet to be harnessed to serve sustainable development through the right policies;

(b) In order to change from being consumers of technology to developers of technology, Arab countries needed to redress their social values and embrace a path to modernity. In particular, the education system in the region simply exported successful students to other regions in search of job opportunities to enable them to meet their potential and achieve career development, dignity and self-esteem. There was a need to build and strengthen partnerships between universities and the private sector to create an enabling, demand-driven environment for innovation;

(c) The role of education could not be overemphasized. Both the content and methods of learning needed to be revisited to promote innovative thinking in students from a young age and throughout all educational levels. That was the only way to transform Arab societies into knowledge societies;

(d) More effort should be directed at empowering enterprises, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to develop home-grown technologies in partnership with regional and international partners and beneficiaries.

G. Session 5. Institutional framework for sustainable development in the Arab region

43. The fifth session was moderated by Ibrahim Adam Ibrahim, State Minister of Welfare and Social Security of the Sudan, who stated that sustainable development could not be achieved without adequate institutional frameworks at the national and regional levels.

44. Bader Malallah, Director General of the Arab Planning Institute, made an intervention on institutional capacity development in the Arab region. He noted that the role of Governments remained pivotal in the institutional framework for development; however, Governments could not act alone and needed to partner with the private sector and civil society. Referring to lessons learned from the experience of Kuwait and other Arab countries, Mr. Malallah stressed the need for Governments to downsize (i.e., step down from their role as major employers), develop national strategic frameworks for development and undertake the economic reforms needed to stimulate investments and create jobs in the private sector. Furthermore, Mr. Malallah called for reform of the Arab regional institutional framework for better effectiveness and to match global frameworks.

45. Shahira Wahbi, Chief, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, and Tarek El-Nabulsi, Counsellor and Director of the Development and Social Policies Department, LAS, presented the regional institutional framework on sustainable development. Mr. El-Nabulsi explained the institutional framework at LAS, including the Arab Summit, the Economic and Social Council and the ministerial councils. He gave a brief overview of the development progress achieved in the region, following which he summarized LAS efforts in preparing for the post-2015 development agenda. Key milestones in the process included the Arab conference on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in December 2013 and the Arab report on the Millennium Development Goals, the Arab Summit in 2013 and a series of meetings in 2014 to identify regional priorities

for the post-2015 development agenda. Close collaboration with the Arab Group in New York was critical to ensure that Arab priorities were reflected.

46. Ms. Wahbi focused her intervention on the efforts to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development into the work of LAS. She made reference notably to the efforts by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment to update the sustainable development initiative in the Arab region, launched in 2002, and develop it into an Arab strategic framework for sustainable development. Ms. Wahbi proposed to integrate the issue of the environment into the Economic and Social Council of LAS, which was well placed to become the review body for sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda at the regional level.

47. The Tunisian experience with national institutional frameworks on sustainable development was presented by Mounir Majdoub, former Secretary of State for Sustainable Development in Tunisia. He pointed out that, although economic growth in Tunisia had kept to a steady pace of around 5 per cent per annum and despite improvements in areas such as health, education and access to drinking water, development had not been equitable and had led to social disparities. Tunisia had been a pioneer in the Arab region in establishing a national sustainable development committee. However, this had not prevented a skew in development away from the social pillar. He concluded that the new Tunisian constitution, developed after the revolution, was rights-based and included the principles of democracy, participation and decentralization, and stated that a sustainable development authority had been established to ensure the rights of future generations.

Summary of discussions

48. During the ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

(a) The post-2015 development agenda necessitated an effective institutional framework that was fit to implement such an integrated agenda. A shift from sectoral planning to multisectoral planning was needed, together with an integrated approach to implementation;

(b) Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms needed to be embedded within development planning systems that were participatory and pluralistic, while ensuring coordination with all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and research institutions;

(c) A new sustainable development paradigm could not be achieved without the prevalence of the principle of participatory democracy, which needed to be applied at all levels, local, national and regional;

(d) Synergy between financial institutions and the policymaking process was important and could be enhanced through the involvement of regional development banks;

(e) Integration between the different directorates within each institution (ministry or other) needed to be ensured;

(f) National sustainable development councils were important in bringing together the range of expertise needed for the formulation of legislation that promoted sustainable development.

H. Session 6. Monitoring of the progress on sustainable development in the Arab region

49. The sixth session was moderated by Ghada Waly, Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt, and President of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs at LAS. She highlighted the importance of building statistical capacities to enable the monitoring of sustainable development progress and the development of evidence-based policies in the Arab countries.

50. Robert Smith, Principal at Midsummer Analytics, presented the results of the review he had prepared for ESCWA on the Arab experience of monitoring sustainable development. Only 40 per cent of the Millennium Development Goals could be monitored with the statistics available, mainly owing to considerable gaps in the data and difficulties in accessing that data. He also identified a reliance on assistance from international organizations to collect data, whereas the region should focus on developing its own capacity to ensure the long-term sustainability of data collection. Mr. Smith made several recommendations: (a) the region should agree on a small set of regional indicators that each country could realistically compile and maintain those indicators over time for comparability; (b) reports on sustainable development indicators should be published on a regular basis to ensure data transparency; (c) governance for sustainable development should be strengthened through an assessment of strengths and weaknesses; and (d) international assistance should be sought to support national capacity-building.

51. John Crowley, Chief of the Research Policy and Foresight Section of UNESCO, spoke about social indicators for the post-2015 development agenda, emphasizing that monitoring was not a technical afterthought to the sustainable development process, but a core element of the process itself. The indicators represented a necessary and shared framework of accountability. However, the goals were much broader than what the indicators could measure, and data on indicators might not be available. Social processes today were richer in data than in the past, and that could be exploited in a useful way, moving from statistics to “societistics” that placed people at the centre of statistics.

52. Gerard Cunningham, Head of Partnerships, Division of Early Warning and Assessment, UNEP, highlighted the multiple benefits of regular data collection and reporting processes. Data collection required large resources; however, if publicly available, it could be used for many different purposes and would inform decision-making at many levels. Collecting data to feed composite indicators that could serve more than one target and more than one goal would allow countries to cope with the large number of indicators. Mr. Cunningham presented several important global initiatives that had improved data availability, notably the Global Environment Outlook, UNEPLive and Eye on Earth.

53. Juraj Riecan, Director of the Statistics Division at ESCWA, encouraged the countries in the region to create regional indicators and play a stronger role in the development of global indicators. Developing indicators as part of an integrated framework would ensure a conceptual approach rather than an aggregation of data. The forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, which was held from 3 to 6 March 2015 in New York, had highlighted the opportunities for bringing statistics and policy together. Mr. Riecan added that statistics could not be reduced to monitoring or ranking countries; rather, their role was to provide advice for

policymaking. International and regional organizations were available to support that process and establish a link between the national, regional and global levels.

54. Nora Alamer, Head of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Supreme Council for Environment, Bahrain, highlighted the adverse side effects of global policies, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which were not adapted to regional and national circumstances and developmental asymmetries. Ms. Alamer presented examples of the social and economic impacts of addressing environmental problems and stressed the importance of ensuring that economies and societies in the region were not affected.

Summary of discussions

55. During the ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

(a) It was important to build national statistical capacity. Coordination between ministries and national statistical offices should be improved to establish a national statistical system that comprised all partners. However, safety and security posed a challenge to continuously collecting data in the Arab region;

(b) The role of civil society was important for data collection and assessment. However, concern was voiced about the role that NGOs could play in reporting data, since the United Nations accepted only reports and data gathered by national authorities. Participants recommended that NGOs adhere to United Nations statistical principles;

(c) Countries were accountable to their citizens for reporting, and there was a shared global framework of accountability on the part of each Member State to all Member States;

(d) Indicators to assess the post-2015 development agenda should serve multiple purposes. An alternative set of indicators could be developed if data were not available or suitable. To be useful, that alternative indicator framework must be accepted internationally. Indicators should then be fed into an accessible data portal, specifically allocated for reporting on sustainable development indicators;

(e) Regional partnerships were helpful, since they enabled comparisons to be made between national statistics on a regional basis. A recent example was the development of a road map for the **Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf**.

Annex I

Agenda

DAY 1: Tuesday 5 May 2015	
8:30 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 11:00	Opening ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Ms. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Social Development, Kingdom of Bahrain - Ms. Rima Khalaf, Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia - H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Tuwaijri, Assistant Secretary-General of Economic Affairs, League of Arab States - Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme - Ms. Sima Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme
11:00 – 12:20	Coffee break and networking
12.20 – 12.30	Presentation of the Forum Agenda
12:30 – 14:30	Session 1: From MDGs to SDGs: Voices from the Arab region Moderator: H.E. Ms. Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Social Development, Kingdom of Bahrain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Status of sustainable development in the Arab Region Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA - Peace and stability in the Arab region as prerequisites for sustainable development – the cost of conflict H.E. Mr. Marwan Muasher, Vice president for studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - The right to development and human dignity – a paradigm shift Mr. Fateh Azzam, Director, Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut - Main discussants - H.E. Ms. Adalah Attira, Head of the Environmental Protection Authority of the State of Palestine - General discussion
14:30 – 15:30	Lunch
15:30 – 17:30	Session 2: Global processes leading to the post-2015 development agenda Moderator: H.E. Mr. Taher Al-Shakhshir, Minister of Environment, and Deputy Chairman of Higher Committee for Sustainable Development, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new framework on disaster risk reduction 2015-2030 Ms. Margareta Wahlström, United Nations Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction - Sustainable Development Goals and the UN summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda Ms. Marion Barthelemy, Chief, Intergovernmental Support and Interagency Branch, Division of Sustainable Development, United Nations - Climate change negotiations and the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC

	<p><i>Mr. Ayman Shasly, International Policies Consultant, Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration and universality: key to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda <i>Mr. Iyad Abumoghli, Director and Regional Representative, United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA)</i> - The Post-2015 Development Agenda: An agenda for the rich? <i>Mr. Roberto Bissio, Executive Director, Third World Institute</i> - General discussion 	
17:30 – 19:00	Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs	
	FAO/WFP/IFPRI and AOAD Side Event: Towards Achieving Food and Nutrition Security in the Arab World	ESCWA/UNEP Side Event: The Arab Sustainable Development Report, Process and Way Forward
19:00	Close of Day 1	
20:00	Dinner hosted by the Government of Bahrain	

DAY 2: Wednesday 6 May 2015

9:00 – 10:30	<p>Session 3: Means of implementation: Financing for sustainable development in the Arab region</p> <hr/> <p>Moderator: <i>H.E. Ms. Naglaa Al-Ahwani, Minister of International Cooperation, Arab Republic of Egypt</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcome document of the Arab preparatory meeting on financing for development <i>Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar El Hacene, Director, Economic Development and Integration Division, ESCWA</i> - Arab positions in the negotiation process on Financing for Development <i>Mr. Tamer Mostafa, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN- New York</i> - Main discussants - <i>Mr. Ayman Shasly, International Policies Consultant, Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</i> 	
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break and Bahrain MDG report launch	
11:00 – 12:30	<p>Session 3 (Continued): Means of implementation: Financing for sustainable development in the Arab region</p> <hr/> <p>Moderator: <i>H.E. Ms. Naglaa Al-Ahwani, Minister of International Cooperation, Arab Republic of Egypt</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green financing: Readiness of the Arab countries <i>Mr. Sherif Arif, Senior Environment and Water Consultant</i> - The role of financial institutions in implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda <i>Mr. Steven Stone, Chief, Economy and Trade Branch, UNEP</i> - Green sukuk <i>Mr. Wafik Graiss, Expert Economist</i> - Main discussants - <i>Mr. Oussama Safa, Chief, Participation and Social Justice Section, Social Development Division, ESCWA</i> - General discussion 	

12:30 – 14:00	Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs	
	ESCWA-AGU-SIDA Side Event: Water for Sustainable Development	UNEP Side Event: From Bahrain to Addis: Catalyzing Investment for a Greener and More Inclusive Economy
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch	
15:00 – 17:00 (parallel sessions)	Session 4A: Means of implementation: Trade for sustainable development in the Arab region Moderator: <i>Dr. Mohammed Ahmad Al Amer, President, Central Informatics Organization, Kingdom of Bahrain</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harnessing Trade for sustainability and closure of Doha development WTO negotiations Round, <i>Ms. Hilda Al-Hinai, Deputy Permanent Representative of Oman to the WTO</i> - Interregional Trade and Economic Integration <i>Mr. Mohammed Abdelssamad El-Hamraoui, Chief of the Division of Relations with the Arab and Islamic World and the Countries of Africa and Asia, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Kingdom of Morocco</i> - Arab Customs Union <i>Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar El Hacene, Director, Economic Development and Integration Division, ESCWA</i> - General discussion 	Session 4B: Means of implementation: Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region Moderator: <i>Mr. Mohammed Ali Al-Qaed, Chief Executive Officer, The Kingdom of Bahrain E-Government Authority (EGA)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainstream Technology in Sustainable Development and SDGs <i>Mr. Haidar Fraihat, Director, Technology for Development Division, ESCWA</i> - Technology in Development <i>Mr. Odeh Al-Jayyousi, Partner and board member, Sustainable Development Professionals Inc.</i> - Investments in Technology <i>Mr. Khalil Hamdani, Visiting Professor, Lahore School of Economics</i> - Main discussants - <i>Mr. Yousef Nusseir, Expert on Technology and Sustainable Development</i> - <i>Mr. Abdulilah Dewachi, Expert on Technology and Sustainable Development</i> - <i>Mr. Mustafa Almahdi, Associate Programme Officer, Arab Regional Office, International Telecommunication Union</i> - General discussion
	Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs	
17:00 – 18:30	ITU-ESCWA-LAS Side Event: Use of ICTs for Smart and Sustainable Development and Protection of the Environment	UNISDR Side Event: Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030: Towards Risk-Sensitive Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
	18:30 Close of Day 2	

DAY 3: Thursday 7 May 2015

9:00 – 11:30	Session 5: Institutional framework for sustainable development in the Arab region	
	Moderator: <i>H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Adam Ibrahim, State Minister of Welfare and Social Security, Sudan</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional Capacity Development <i>Mr. Bader Malallah, Director General of the Arab Planning Institute, the State of Kuwait</i> 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional institutional framework on sustainable development: Efforts of the League of Arab States in preparing for the sustainable development agenda <i>Ms. Shahira Wahbi, Chief, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, League of Arab States</i> <i>Mr. Tarek El-Nabulsi, Counsellor, Director of Development and Social Policies Department, Responsible of Coordination and Follow up Unit, Cabinet of Assistant Secretary General for Social Affairs, League of Arab States</i> - National institutional frameworks on sustainable development <i>H.E. Mr. Mounir Majdoub, Former Secretary of State for Sustainable Development, Tunisia</i> - Main discussants - <i>Ms. Barbara Adams, Global Policy Forum</i> - <i>Mr. Emadeldin Adly, General Coordinator, Arab network for Environment and Development (RAED)</i> - <i>Ms. Naima Gebril, Member of the Libyan National Dialogue Commission</i> - General discussion
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 14:00	<p><u>Session 6: Monitoring of sustainable development progress in the Arab region</u></p> <p>Moderator: <i>H.E. Ms. Ghada Waly, Minister of Social Solidarity, Arab Republic of Egypt, and President of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs, League of Arab States</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring of sustainable development in the Arab region <i>Mr. Robert Smith, Principal, Midsummer Analytics</i> - Social indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda <i>Mr. John Crowley, Chief of Research Policy and Foresight, UNESCO</i> - Enhancing data delivery for the SDGs through regular assessment and reporting processes <i>Mr. Gerard Cunningham, Head of Partnerships in the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)</i> - "Data Revolution" in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda <i>Mr. Juraj Riecan, Director, Statistics Division, ESCWA</i> - The social and economic adverse effects of climate change mitigation actions <i>Ms. Nora Alamer, Head of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Supreme Council for Environment, Kingdom of Bahrain</i> - Main discussants - <i>National Offices of Statistics: the State of Kuwait, the State of Palestine, and the Kingdom of Bahrain</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Ms. Mona Al-Daas, Assistant Under-Secretary, Statistical Affairs, Central Statistical Bureau of Kuwait</i> o <i>Mr. Maher Sbieh, Responsible for the SDGs, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics</i> o <i>Mr. Nabil Ben Shams, Director General, Administration for Statistics, Central Informatics Organization, Kingdom of Bahrain</i> - General discussion

14:00 – 15:00	Lunch	
15:00 – 16:00	<i>Parallel side events: Mainstreaming sectoral issues into the SDGs</i>	
	UN-Habitat Side Event: Towards More Inclusive, Integrated, Resilient and Sustainable Cities in the Arab Region	UNESCO Side Event: The Operationalization of Inclusiveness in the Post-2015 Development Agenda
16:00 – 18:00	<i>Closing Session: The Way forward</i> <hr/> Moderator: <i>Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key messages from the Forum: The Bahrain Document, presented by the Government of Bahrain - Closing remarks by ESCWA, UNEP and LAS 	
18:00	Close of the meeting	

Annex II

Summary of discussions at side events

Side event 1: Towards achieving food and nutrition security in the Arab World

The side event on food and nutrition security in the Arab world was jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD). The side event discussed the level of food security in the region, opportunities and threats to achieving it.

Despite increases in agricultural production in the Arab region in the past years, the gap between demand and supply in the region is widening due to increased population. The region is marked by unemployment and conflict, which prevents focus on farming, strongly affects markets, transportation and trade, and further exacerbates the fragility of the region. The region will continue to depend on food imports and due to price volatility the cost of food imports will remain high. However, there is great potential in some countries for increasing agricultural production and yields per unit of land and water, especially of fruit and vegetable. Greater regional cooperation and integration would allow these countries to export to countries in the region with lower agricultural production. This would allow countries in the Arab region to focus on their comparative advantages and otherwise rely on imports.

Participants mentioned that caution needs to be exercised when looking at regional statistics which can mask the reality, due to the large differences in the region. In order to create change, we need to face the reality to see how the individual countries are doing.

Increased food production cannot be equated with higher nutrition security. The Arab region is strongly marked by an increase in chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency at the same time as obesity. Studies show that relative to the national gross domestic product (GDP), child stunting is high in most countries of the region.

Policy reforms are needed at various levels. First of all, the different agricultural organisations should be working together and a roadmap for integrated efforts should be established. Organisations however do not substitute the role of the state, which is responsible for the agricultural production programme. The targeting of subsidies also needs careful revision.

Side event 2: The Arab Sustainable Development Report, process and way forward

The side event was co-organized by ESCWA and UNEP to present the prototype edition of the Arab Sustainable Development Report (ASDR), including its preparation process, methodology, and key findings. In addition, the side event provided an opportunity to exchange lessons learned from the national sustainable development assessments in Arab countries, which were prepared as inputs to the ASDR.

During the discussion, participants suggested that the ASDR should highlight some of the positive developments in the region over the past years, including efforts to improve the institutional framework, diversify the economic structure, and increase share of renewable energy and intra-regional investments. The inclusion of success stories from the Arab countries was also recommended. Participants were keen to have a balanced report between the three pillars of sustainable development and suggested a wider analysis of the productive sectors in the region (notably industry and agriculture), as well as the role of the youth. Since the structure of the Global Sustainable Development Report and the SDG indicators are yet to be agreed upon by the member states, some participants suggested that this prototype edition of the ASDR be considered as an “exercise” and its structure revised in light of global outcomes.

Lessons learned from the national assessments were as follows. In Jordan, the report was an occasion to improve national dialogue on sustainable development and catalyse coordinated action between ministries. A key message is that the cost of addressing the impact of crisis (e.g. support to refugees) is much higher than the cost of preventing crisis. In Lebanon, the absence of a national development plan with agreed goals was a challenge to the preparation of the assessment. Current efforts are being exerted by the Lebanese Council of Ministers to develop a national sustainable development strategy. In Tunisia, a key message is that the acceleration of growth needs to go hand in hand with ensuring inclusiveness and the participation of all stakeholders in the development process. Innovative ways are needed to address emerging challenges and overcome the entrenched resistance to change. In Morocco, a national development framework was built from the sectoral strategies through an integrated approach, and such effort cannot succeed without the political will to implement. In Sudan, the Vision 2030 was built on the MDGs, and the transition to SDGs can only be undertaken with the participation of all ministries and coordination with other concerned institutions. In Egypt, one of the observed pitfalls is that ministries are simply relabelling their plans to refer to sustainable development, while in reality they continue their business as usual. This needs to be avoided by ensuring a real transformation through the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development.

Side event 3: Water for sustainable development

The side event was co-organized by ESCWA, the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), to discuss regional water priorities of Arab States to achieve sustainable development.

The Arab Water Strategy is a general guideline that serves as a basis for the development of further national and regional strategies, such as the Unified Water Sector Strategy for the GCC countries 2015-2035. The latter strategy addresses issues such as transboundary water as well as wastewater treatment. Its main objective is to achieve water security in support of sustainable development and to promote joint Arab water management, as well as providing a joint statistical database on water rights and sustainability. A working group should be established at the regional level to develop an implementation plan to pursue the goals of the strategy.

Access to water impacted the achievement of all the MDGs. Marginal improvements in access to water were observed in the region overall, despite population growth and other challenges. However, 55 million people (15% of the population) in the Arab region still do not have access to improved water sources. In terms of sanitation, open defecation is still being practiced and 66 million people have no access to adequate sanitation services. SDGs now include a dedicated goal for water, but water is also present throughout the different goals and targets. Water is also referenced in the preamble of the SDGs.

The side event provided examples of problems that countries in the Arab region face in pursuing sustainable development and suggested priorities for solutions:

(a) The GCC depends strongly on desalination, requiring stable energy sources and financial resources. Despite the high costs of desalination, which are reducing the financial income of countries as well as having environmental adverse effects, governments have the responsibility to provide sufficient quantities of water to meet municipal needs.

(b) Gaza has limited access to the shared transboundary water resources. The aquifer is over-abstracted by four times its sustainable yield. The occupation seriously obstructs the achievement of sustainable development since Palestine has no sovereignty over its natural resources, notably water.

(c) Sweden, a major donor on water issues takes a regional approach to water management and aims to respond to regional needs for sustained support. In particular, Sweden funds policy processes that lead to a fair, just and equitable distribution of water resources.

Side event 4: From Bahrain to Addis: catalysing investment for a greener and more inclusive economy

The side event entitled “From Bahrain to Addis: Catalysing Investment for a Greener and more Inclusive Economy” was organized by UNEP and engaged participants in an interactive panel discussion with high-level speakers from UAE, Jordan, Palestine, UNEP, ESCWA and the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED).

The discussions revolved around the role of economic policy, finance and investment in driving sustainability forward in light of the Addis Ababa Conference in July 2015. High level speakers shared their green economy experiences, which are based on national priorities, resources and national development plans. Examples included the strategic vision of the UAE of transitioning towards a green economy through innovation and policy implementation, which will ensure environmental protection alongside continued economic growth. The UAE focuses on green transport, fuel efficiency standards and the importance of sustainable waste management practices. Jordan focuses strongly on green vehicles and improved public transport to reduce reliance on private cars. The country also works on transforming solid waste to energy and recycling. In Palestine progress on sustainable development is hampered by the occupation however the involvement from civil society is strong and donor support drives efforts towards sustainability. AFED laid out the regional priorities identified in their annual report on Green

Economy in the Arab Region and emphasised that transitioning to a green economy is not an option but a necessity to achieve sustainable development.

Furthermore, the discussions centred on the need to move towards a “sustainable financial system”. Issues were raised regarding the need to raise the awareness, and build the capacity of investors and financial regulators on sustainability challenges and related economic opportunities. The power of local initiatives should indeed be emphasized, since financial markets have so far not delivered on investments to create sustainable development. In order to further attract sustainable development finance, subsidies that have detrimental effects on resource use need to be reformed.

Side event 5: Use of ICTs for smart and sustainable development and protection of the environment

The side event was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in cooperation with ESCWA to present ITU’s Arab regional initiative on the use of telecommunications/ICTs for smart and sustainable development and protection of the environment. The side event aimed to inform participants about the key components of the initiative, challenges to be addressed and the proposed work plan to be delivered to meet expected results. The ITU other aim in organising this side event was to encourage governments, regional and international agencies to join partnership in this initiative. The initiative was presented by Arab countries to the Arab ITU office and focuses on five areas, namely electronic waste, water management, climate change, use of ICTs in emergency situations, and smart cities. Activities include the preparation of studies as well country support in the form of policy and regulatory frameworks and pilot projects.

Furthermore, the side event provided an opportunity to exchange ideas from practical experiences in the field. The high cost of transferring ICTs for smart and sustainable development was highlighted in the discussions as a main hurdle. It was noted that given the current political situation in the region, policy-makers may have shifted their priorities away from ICTs; however it should be stressed that ICTs are not a luxury but basic requirements for any country to achieve its national ambitions. There was stress on the need for regional cooperation in this field according to a regional framework that embodies individual initiatives such as the ITU’s, noting that it is hard for an Arab country alone to embark on the needed transformation.

Side event 6: Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: towards risk-sensitive sustainable development in the Arab region

The side event organized by UNISDR presented the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015-2030, which was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Miyagi, Japan. The framework applies to small-scale and large-scale risks, frequent and infrequent, sudden and slow-onset disasters, caused by natural or man-made hazards as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks.

Globally, the number of people affected and the environmental degradation due to disasters has increased. In addition many countries in the Arab region face a refugee crisis. This exacerbates poverty and puts additional stress on natural resources. In the Arab region, more and more countries are providing necessary data for assessments of disaster risk, which are the basis for Disaster Risk Management. More attention is paid to DRR through global awareness campaigns, however DRR education needs to be adapted to national and local circumstances.

The Sendai Framework aims to achieve a tangible decrease of disaster risks, including on lives, health, and social, cultural and economic assets. A strategy for the Arab region is necessary to apply the new framework and to promote policies and actions to reduce disaster risk. To ensure implementation, a national mechanism concerned with disaster risk management should be established, that would proceed to coordinate at international level on behalf of the country. Regionally, an information network is important to act as an early warning system.

The Sendai Framework foresees a periodic review of progress as part of the United Nations follow-up processes for conferences and summits aligned with ECOSOC, including the High Level Political Forum and the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

Side event 7: Towards more inclusive, integrated, resilient and sustainable cities in the Arab region

The side event on more inclusive, integrated, resilient and sustainable cities in the Arab region was organized by UN-Habitat in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Arab Towns Organization, and the Arab Urban Development Institute.

The side event centred on the numerous pressures that cities face. To move towards a new urban agenda, urbanization needs to be integrated, inclusive and sustainable. The new urbanization model is universal and adaptable to different national circumstances, based on key urbanization challenges and opportunities shared by all countries. It must respect, protect and promote human rights. It must rely on equitable urban development and inclusive urban growth, which entails bringing equality and non-discrimination considerations, including gender equality, to the centre of urban development. Implementation of the model must be integrated to address the inter linkages between the environmental, social and economic objectives of sustainable development, and the concerns of different levels of government. It must also enable the empowerment of civil society, thus expanding democratic participation and reinforcing collaboration. The agenda must encompass green cities and environmental sustainability, which involves establishing a critical connection between science, environment, economic growth, urban planning and governance. The key to achieve this move forward is innovation, learning and knowledge sharing, which entail the creation of supportive education, science, technology and innovation policies as well as development of capacities.

The last and most important element to move towards more inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities in the Arab region is a global data revolution to attain effective and results-based implementation and monitoring of the new urban agenda at the local, national and global levels. There are a number of enabling tools and reports which can facilitate this move such as the Cities Prosperity Index, the Arab

Sustainable Development Report, the State of Arab Cities Report, and other national and regional reports.

Side event 8: The operationalization of inclusiveness in the post-2015 development agenda

The UNESCO side event on the operationalization of “inclusiveness” aimed at the clarification of the concepts, methods and institutional dynamics required to build inclusiveness into the post-2015 development agenda. This is of utmost importance since each of the six areas put forward by the UN Secretary-General in his Synthesis Report either explicitly or implicitly refers to inclusion as an essential objective in pursuing sustainable development and an essential criterion in assessing actions and outcomes. UNESCO highlighted the areas in which it can contribute to national and regional policy development in the Arab region through its intergovernmental Management of Social Transformations programme (MOST). UNESCO’s technical input will build on current steps towards the establishment of the MOST Inclusive Policy Lab, an initiative under development to refine concepts, clarify methodologies, establish knowledge management platforms and provide practical capacity building to member states to integrate the social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

The discussion focused on the need to interpret policy inclusiveness through a regional lens, with a view to supporting practical interventions that take into consideration the particularities of the Arab context. The ambiguities of the “inclusiveness” concept were explained and the analytical framework currently under development within the MOST programme was briefly outlined. Emphasis was put on the knowledge management processes and communities of practice to be established to ensure monitoring, the integration of multiple dimensions and the involvement of a highly diverse group of stakeholders.

The lack of participatory and inclusive processes in urban planning was highlighted through an analysis of space, ownership and inclusiveness of urban examples in selected Arab countries, with special focus on projects in Lebanon and Jordan.

Annex III

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	6. Women's Rights and Gender Equality for Sustainable Development
	7. Measuring Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
	8. A Human Rights Approach to Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
RCM Issues Briefs	
	1. Economic Growth, Inequality and Poverty in the Arab Region
	2. Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture in the Arab Region
	3. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in the Arab Region
	4. Water and Sanitation in the Arab Region
	5. Energy in the Arab Region
	6. Employment and Decent Work in the Arab Region
	7. Industrialization and Innovation in the Arab Region
	8. Perspectives on Inequality Challenges in the Arab Region
	9. Making Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable in the Arab Region
	10. Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Arab Region
	11. Climate Change in the Arab Region
	12. Marine Resources in the Arab Region
	13. Terrestrial Ecosystems and Biodiversity in the Arab Region
	14. Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience and Sustainable Development in the Arab Region
	15. Strengthening Regional and Global Partnerships for Trade and Investment in the Arab Region
National Assessments	
	1. Jordan
	2. Lebanon
	3. Morocco
	4. Yemen
	5. Tunisia
	6. Sudan

Annex V

Evaluation of the Forum

An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Forum. A total of 53 participants responded to the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents rated the overall quality of the meeting as excellent or good (85%). The forum objectives were clear according to 82% of respondents and 73% found that the forum did “good” or “excellent” in successfully reaching the intended objectives. Participants lauded the facilitation of discussions as well as the quality of presentations and background documents, with over 87% of respondents rating all three categories as “good” or “excellent”. The forum presented a unique opportunity for networking and sharing of experience to most respondents.

Most respondents indicated a need to follow-up on the meeting to work on the integration of sustainable development in the Arab region and to create a regional vision. Some participants also suggested that follow-up efforts were needed to improve coordination at the national level, strengthen national statistical focal points, and establish a participatory framework for sustainable development review and follow-up. When asked about suggestions for improving future forums, respondents recommended discussing core topics in the main sessions of the forum rather than in side-events, ensuring a more comprehensive coverage of topics, and providing more space for the presentation of national success stories from the region. Participants also suggested expanding participation in the Forum further to include experts and financing institutions. Finally, participants expressed the wish to have more time to discuss the Bahrain Document.
