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High-level political forum on sustainable development

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Input from the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.



Report of the Arab High-level political forum on sustainable development

[Original: Arabic]

Introduction

1. In cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), United Nations organizations working in the Arab region and the Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) convened the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development from 3 to 5 May 2017, in Rabat. The theme of the Forum was “Advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Arab region”, chosen to coincide with the subject of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017 and entitled, “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”, at which the outputs of the Arab Forum and other regional forums will be presented. The 2017 Arab Forum was chaired by the Kingdom of Morocco and proceedings were opened by the Moroccan Prime Minister, Dr. Saadeddine Othmani.

2. The Forum is a high-level regional platform for review and follow-up of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region (hereafter referred to as the 2030 Agenda). Following on from the success of the three previous sessions, held in Amman in 2014 and 2016 and Manama in 2015, the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 29th Ministerial Session of ESCWA (Doha, 13-15 December 2016), affirmed the Forum’s role as an annual gathering that brings together Arab governments and sustainable development bodies to review national and regional experience and study the mechanics of implementing the 2030 Agenda at national and regional levels.¹ The outputs of the Arab Forum will be submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York in July every year.

3. This year’s Forum coincided with the start of the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, during which more Arab States have begun to adapt their plans and strategies, establish the necessary institutional structures to support implementation of the Agenda at national level, and design follow-up and review mechanisms at national and regional levels.

4. The significance of the Arab Forum is to be found in its participatory character. It brings high-level representatives from ministries and bodies responsible for planning and following up implementation of the 2030 Agenda together with representatives from Arab parliaments, a wide range of regional and international organizations, civil society networks and organizations, the private sector, think tanks etc.

5. The programme of the 2017 Forum included plenary sessions focusing on the key theme of “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Arab

¹ The Forum draws its terms of reference from a series of resolutions adopted by ESCWA, including resolution 327 (XXIX) on the working mechanisms of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 29th session; resolution 314 (XXVIII) on the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 28th session (Tunis, 15-18 September 2014); and resolution 322 on supporting Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda, adopted at the second meeting of the Executive Committee of ESCWA (Amman, 14-16 December 2015).

region”, national experience of implementing the 2030 Agenda and means of implementation at regional level. It also included special sessions focusing on Arab region priorities, such as gender equality, the environment, population, food security, health and poverty, and incorporation of the Agenda in development planning.

6. The discussions produced key messages from the perspective of the Arab region for submission to the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York and for presentation to the third meeting of the Executive Committee of ESCWA, the 30th Ministerial Session of ESCWA and other related forums that may be held at a later date, including Arab Sustainable Development Week.

I. Key messages to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

a. General messages

- The 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development adopted its key messages for submission to the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development. It renewed its commitment to the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the guidelines formulated at general and sector-based regional forums linked to the Agenda and consistent with the principles and substance thereof;
- Security, peace, an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and the Palestinian people’s enjoyment of its legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination, are essential conditions for achieving development, eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in the Arab region;
- Eradicating poverty and achieving justice and good governance are priorities in and of themselves and preconditions for sustainability and stability;
- The regional dimension has an important part to play in driving the 2030 Agenda in the Arab countries, and the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development has a fundamental role in stimulating action at regional and national levels, communicating the achievements and concerns of the region at global level and influencing the course of the global agenda;
- Practical solutions should be created to address those issues that previous Arab forums to have deemed to be regional in nature. Those solutions should be based on a clear programme of action taking into account the capacities of States and available resources, with particular focus on empowering women and ensuring their effective participation in development and decision-making at all levels;
- There is a need to give effect to the principle of participation at all levels and adopt mechanisms to ensure that all stakeholders and governmental and non-governmental actors in implementing and following up the 2030 Agenda.

b. National experience and national voluntary reviews

National experience in implementing the 2030 Agenda

- The 2030 Agenda does not constitute an additional burden on States. Rather, it is a framework that complements and coordinates their efforts to address national priorities and achieve common goals;

- It is important to affirm national leadership and ownership in adapting the 2030 Agenda in line with national specificities and priorities in partnership with all stakeholders;
- The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development provides a valuable opportunity each year to discuss the experience of Arab States in terms of institutional frameworks, policy, technical mechanisms and constitutional and legal measures designed to institutionalize the right to development and propose suitable policies compatible with the legislation of each State;
- It is important to adopt institutional frameworks and legislative measures along the lines of those adopted by several Arab States to constitutionalize rights or agree upon a national charter for sustainable development.

National voluntary reviews

- National voluntary reviews help promote national ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals, increase awareness of the principles they enshrine and determine national priorities and objectives;
- It is important to uphold a participatory approach to preparing national voluntary reviews in order to ensure credibility and comprehensiveness in accordance with the principles of the 2030 Agenda;
- It is important to adopt a rights-based approach to the follow-up and review process and consult periodic reports submitted by States to international human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies, especially the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in order to standardize follow-up and review mechanisms in line with comparable models.

c. Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity

- Adopt a broad conceptual approach to social and poverty eradication policies within the framework of comprehensive development plans;
- Take into account the links between poverty and inequality in addressing the causes of poverty and existing disparities, adopt a multi-dimensional concept of poverty, study poverty in its local manifestations and develop appropriate methodologies to measure it;
- Effect change in economic structures and social policies, incorporate environmental dimensions, reform labour market governance, fight corruption and reduce any clash among economic, social and environmental goals;
- Accord sufficient importance to employment and workforce protection policies, make a practical commitment to international conventions and acknowledge the role of the unions and collective dialogue in achieving decent employment;
- Reform monetary and fiscal policies to achieve redistribution and social justice, putting an end to discriminatory policies and establishing a rights-based approach to inequality;
- Seek to address cause and effect at the same time: ending occupation, war and conflict, which are the main causes of poverty and vulnerability, and adopting policies combining relief, humanitarian action and development, in addition to building capacities and flexibility;
- Incorporate all dimensions of development, without exception, in strategies to oppose occupation and conflict, including those related to production, labour

and natural resource management and protection, and provide services for all in order to foster resilience;

- Involve everyone in creating sustainable solutions, especially women, persons with disabilities, the poor, the weak and the most marginalized groups;
- Build effective and accountable institutions and inclusive, just and transparent systems of governance, these being the preconditions for resolving crises, averting war and establishing lasting peace;
- Broaden the national policy-making space and consolidate the right of States to formulate policies which serve their interests and maintain their sovereignty over their own resources;
- Consolidate the integrated management of strategic planning and implementation in the development sector as a fundamental pillar of the work of government institutions.

d. Regional priorities

Gender equality and empowerment of women

- Review constitutional and legal frameworks to uphold women's rights and empowerment and formulate practical mechanisms to apply these rights;
- Formulate integrated and inclusive gender equality policies as part of the sustainable development agenda at national and regional levels;
- Take action at regional level to reduce gaps within and between States regarding women's economic and political participation and put an end to violence and harmful practices against women;
- Put in place an effective system of monitoring and follow-up on the basis of a list of gender equality and empowerment indicators, taking national issues and regional trends into account.

The environment and sustainability

- Incorporate the environmental dimension in all areas of development and build effective partnerships to preserve the planet and its natural resources, according particular attention to the havoc wreaked on the environment, natural resources and cultural heritage by war and conflict: in such conditions, the environment is a silent victim;
- Incorporate the concepts and principles of sustainable development at all educational levels to help build an environmentally responsible generation that will practise environmentally sustainable behaviour;
- Place the environment at the heart of economic and social development, as sovereignty over the management of natural resources and the protection and proper, sustainable use thereof is key to combating poverty, achieving prosperity and promoting peace and stability.

Population

- Incorporate issues of international migration in development policy at national and regional levels as drivers of economic and social development;
- Focus on internal migration and the development of appropriate urban policies to address the effects of increasing urbanization in Arab countries;

- Make investments designed to benefit from the demographic dividend of growing numbers of young people by investing in their health, welfare and education, developing their skills, empowering them economically by giving them employment and encouraging them to be entrepreneurs and stakeholders, in accordance with the frame of reference of the Cairo Declaration of the Conference on Population and Development (2013) and the 2030 Agenda;
- Give effect to the proposals of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), concerning the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations designed to make cities safe, inclusive and healthy, ensuring that they use resources in a sound and sustainable manner and are managed in accordance with participatory governance systems.

Food security

- Reduce reliance on food imports by investing in the development of technology to ensure sustainability of food production and reduce pressure on natural resources;
- Grant priority to developing agriculture to help boost the economy, promote food security and reduce poverty, particularly by creating jobs in sectors that will safeguard the environment and natural resources;
- Curb food waste in order to reduce the food security gap.

Health

- Adopt an integrated approach to development based on close collaboration between the ministry of health and other ministries and stakeholders to address major challenges and meet the health needs of all;
- Formulate an inclusive health policy that takes into account the needs of marginalized groups and the weakest in society, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and carriers of the HIV/AIDS virus;
- Introduce the dimension of gender equality in Sustainable Development Goal 3, on health, to address the major regional challenges of child marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against women.

Disability

- Grant special attention to the rights of persons with disabilities by adopting a holistic approach and including disability issues in national development plans and programmes;
- Adopt social protection policies and systems designed to reduce inequality and discrimination and ensure that the disabled have access to resources, jobs and public services; this will include development of technologies to promote self-reliance at all levels;
- Form a specialized, regional working group to monitor the extent to which disability issues are incorporated within policies and mechanisms relating to the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Invite regional actors in the field of sustainable development, including ESCWA, to organize regional follow-up and review workshops to promote the role of civil society in monitoring progress, particularly as regards access by persons with disabilities to places, services and information, in accordance with the principle of equality for all.

The family

- Focus attention on the family as a basic component of Arab society and guardian of social cohesion, formulating integrated development plans that take into account the needs of all family members and the changes occurring in the family and society, as well as closure of the knowledge gap;

Human rights

- Respect the right to development and commit to international human rights standards as a precondition for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and development, with no-one left behind;
- Adopt a rights-based approach to social policy, particularly in relation to fighting poverty, achieving social justice and eliminating discrimination against any population group on whatever grounds;
- Foster regional efforts to put in place inclusive social protection systems on the basis of the minimum level of social protection, curb discriminatory practices against women and girls, the disabled, young people, adolescents and groups discriminated against on grounds of race, nationality, religion, creed etc. and respect the right to development, the right to self-determination and the right to sovereignty over resources.

e. Means of implementation at regional level

- Mobilize means of implementation at regional level, including financial resources, human and technological capacities, commercial resources, data and statistical systems and partnerships with civil society, the private sector, universities and research centres;
- Create a regional mechanism to build agreement on means of funding at regional level and give effect to commitments and pledges;
- Foster proposals for funding development at regional level using sustainable mechanisms designed to promote the concept of joint responsibility, reduce the funding deficit and limit dependence on conditional aid;
- Foster regional dialogue on implementing the Addis Ababa Agenda on financing for development and strengthen international cooperation and partnerships on the basis of national and regional priorities;
- Cooperate in the field of information technology in order to reduce costs and increase efficiency, make databases available to researchers and create regional structures and mechanisms to support scientific research in the service of the Sustainable Development Goals, empowerment and localization of technology;
- Cooperate in the field of commerce, taking into account the particular features of individual States and the production sectors of each in order to mitigate the severity of competition and promote integration;
- Develop statistical systems and the legislation pertaining thereto, identify regional goal and target-related indicators and build a database to monitor these;
- Develop programmes to boost capacities and close the knowledge gap;
- Ensure the right of access to information for all to enable people to contribute to the drafting of development policies and programmes, while seeking to observe a rights perspective in all data classification;

- Cooperate and enter into partnership with civil society, including trade unions, on a non-discretionary or formal basis as a precondition for achieving the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that all stakeholders have the right to express a view, participate in and influence the course of events; promote the Decade of Arab Civil Society Organizations in this context;
- Foster the role of the private sector as an essential partner in development, stressing its commitment to social and environmental responsibility and to human rights.

f. Promoting the regional drive for the 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

Translate pledges into practical steps in the form of regional activities to be implemented before the next Forum, as follows:

- Organize a meeting of experts, bringing together all stakeholders to agree upon a shortlist of goals, targets and indicators that will constitute a regional framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda (based on previously agreed regional issues and the Doha Declaration);
- Explore regional follow-up and review mechanisms, including the design and content of the Arab Sustainable Development Report;
- Widen the base of consultation and dialogue with non-governmental partners, particularly civil society organizations and the private sector;
- Organize a regional meeting of parliamentarians to promote the role of national parliaments in implementing, monitoring and following up the 2030 Agenda;
- Promote knowledge production and capacity-building by developing Arabic language training materials on adapting the 2030 Agenda to national and regional characteristics;
- Create a team of experts and trainers specializing in the goals of the 2030 Agenda;
- Promote partnerships and organize joint activities with regional actors in the development field, including the United Nations and LAS;
- Prepare a report on progress achieved in implementing this programme, for presentation to the 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

II. Conduct of sessions and content of presentations

7. In addition to the opening and closing sessions, the Forum included eight plenary sessions, focusing on the key theme of “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Arab region” and national experience of implementing the 2030 Agenda and means of implementation at regional level, as well as five special sessions on Arab region priorities, such as gender equality, the environment, population, food security, health and poverty and their incorporation in the development plan. The plenary sessions dealt with the following topics:

- Session 1: Preparatory presentation on the second year of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region;
- Session 2: Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: the Arab perspective;
- Session 3: National voluntary reviews;

- Session 4: Poverty and prosperity: the question of distribution;
- Session 5: Poverty and prosperity: inclusive growth and decent work;
- Session 6: Building prosperous societies through peace and stability;
- Session 7: Achieving prosperity by mobilizing the means of implementation at regional level;
- Session 8: Dialogue on the key messages to emerge from the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and future steps.

a. Opening session

8. The opening session was addressed by HE Dr. Saadeddine Othmani, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco; Dr. Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCWA; and Ms. Nada el-Agizy, Director, Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, League of Arab States (on behalf of the Secretary-General). Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, took part by video recording.

9. Dr. Saadeddine Othmani focused on sustainable development as a noble goal, designed to achieve a decent life for all, alleviate human suffering and safeguard the rights of future generations. The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, he was, was an occasion for collective reflection, and was informed by the unique characteristics of the Arab region, which currently faced a grave situation. He further stressed that tensions in the Arab countries required collective action to save what could be saved and achieve a reasonable degree of progress in the Sustainable Development Goal indicators in order to enable the region to play an effective role at the global level. Dr. Othmani called for solidarity, cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and expertise in order to benefit from fruitful experiences. He commended the Moroccan model, which held the human being to be the key to development and invention and a fundamental agent of integrated, balanced and sustainable economic growth. Concluding his address, Dr. Othmani reaffirmed that Morocco was determined to join regional efforts to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

10. Ms. Amina Mohammed highlighted the importance of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development as a valuable opportunity for collective reflection on how to confront the challenges to development in the Arab region on the basis of the 2030 Agenda. She stressed that issues of social, economic and environmental inequality, youth unemployment and discrimination against women, no less than conflict, extremism and violence, diminished a country's capacity for progress, undermined past achievements and weakened current efforts to supply water, conserve nature, address the impact of climate change, develop infrastructure and promote regional trade and sustainable economic growth.

11. Ms. Nada el-Agizy spoke about the difficulties facing development in the Arab region and underscored the importance of security and stability in creating an environment that would help address poverty — the subject of the 2016 Arab Forum — in all its aspects. She commended United Nations and League of Arab States efforts to strengthen the capacities of Member States and build institutions. The 2030 Agenda should be incorporated in national and regional strategies on the basis of consultation and national dialogue. Ms. el-Agizy further stressed the importance of the recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting regarding environmental issues, regional priorities and the need to incorporate the environmental dimension in development efforts as a fundamental element of economic and social stability. It was also important to exchange information and benefit from the experience of other regions, especially in developing the green

economy, green investments and sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

12. After thanking Morocco and the Forum's partners, Dr. Khawla Mattar said that regional forums were determined to use the 2030 Agenda to lead the Arab region toward a better future, as expressed by the Arab States in the Doha Declaration (2016) and at the 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. She commended the Moroccan development model and the experience of Arab States in complying with the 2030 Agenda in a meaningful way. She also outlined the institutions and policies that would support the realization of the ambitious global goals set forth in the Agenda. It was essential to involve all stakeholders and boost cooperation, integration and solidarity at the regional level in order to provide a decent life for the Arab people. Development was the right and responsibility of everyone, particularly in the light of the current crises, wars and the Israeli occupation of Palestine. There was a need to step up efforts and promote coordination between actors to make available the necessary resources and capacities to serve the countries and peoples of the region.

b. Plenary sessions

Session 1: Preparatory presentation on the second year of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region

13. The session was opened by Mr. Ziad Obeidat, Director of Development Plans and Programmes at the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, who stressed the importance of convening the Forum on a regular basis and continuing to work within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. The Arab region must have an effective presence at international level. He commended the participatory character of the Forum, particularly the involvement of representatives of young people, women, the private sector and civil society alongside those of governments. The 2030 Agenda was being implemented amidst a multitude of challenges including occupation, war and conflict. There could be no development without peace and no peace without development and good governance.

14. Ms. Karima al-Korri, officer in charge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Unit, ESCWA, reviewed the role and goals of the Forum's 2017 programme of action. Due attention should be granted to regional action in achieving the 2030 Agenda, given the close link between regional issues and the challenges of national development. It was essential to explore regional solutions and policies that would assist national processes, and to determine and achieve regional goals directly in partnership with stakeholders. The challenges of poverty, inequality, unemployment and natural resource scarcity required special attention, particularly given that war, conflict, insecurity and instability were common regional issues that had an enormous impact on the countries of the region. The forum should address the following important topics, which were directly relevant to the region:

- What regional framework or mechanism would be needed in order to make the transition from commitment to action and effective implementation?
- What sort of joint action was required to transform the structure of inequality, address unjust power relations and bring about long-term change?
- Was it possible to formulate a short-term action plan that would translate good intentions into the allocation of appropriate resources?
- What were the requirements for adopting a regional approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals? What regional follow-up and review mechanisms might be adopted?

Session 2: Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: the Arab perspective

15. The session was chaired by Ms. Limia Abdulghaffar, Secretary-General of the Sudanese National Population Council, and the following took part in the proceedings: Mr. Daoud al-Deek, Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Development, member of the Sustainable Development Steering Committee and member of the National Committee for Sustainable Development (Palestine); Ambassador Tariq al-Ansari, Director, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Qatar); Mr. Sami Bougacha, Director, Department of Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tunisia); Ms. Haifa Muqrin, Head of the Sustainable Development Goals Sector, Ministry of Economy and Planning (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia); and Mr. Mohammed Mihdad, Director of Governance, Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco.

16. National presentations, while addressing common issues, differed in accordance with the challenges faced by each State. With regard to adapting the global agenda to national conditions, speakers were in favour of incorporating or localizing global goals, objectives and indicators into current and new national plans and sectoral strategies, as opposed to addressing them separately. Statistical frameworks compatible with national goals should be developed. Speakers emphasized that the principles of national ownership, the provision of technical support and partnership were fundamental to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

17. Participants stressed the importance of adopting a clear system to manage the development process. Several measures adopted by a number of Arab States to institutionalize the sustainable development process were reviewed. These included the adoption of national charters, laws and regulatory legislative frameworks (as in Morocco), constitutionalizing the right to development (as in Tunisia) and translation of the political commitment to the 2030 Agenda into leadership structures at the highest levels (office of the prime minister or president), involving all relevant ministries and sectors to drive the process of sustainable development.

18. The discussion focused on ways of achieving sustainability in all sectors, the importance of formulating a unified conceptual framework for sustainable development at regional level and the need to find sources of funding, including Arab ones, without conditionalities. Participants addressed the efforts of Arab States to activate the funding process in line with Sustainable Development Goal 17, concerning revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development and, in particular, target 6 regarding enhancing North-South and South-South regional and international cooperation. Civil society representatives noted that most of the national strategies and experience reviewed did not refer to persons with disabilities; that category had been neglected at the planning and organization stages.

Session 3: National voluntary reviews

19. The session was chaired by Mr. Aziz Ajbilo, Secretary-General of the Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco. It was addressed by Ambassador Ashraf Ibrahim, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs (Egypt); Engineer Ziad Obeidat, Director of Development Plans and Programmes, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan); Ms. Noura al-Muraikhi, Director, Department of Planning and Quality, Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics (Qatar); and Mr. Ilcheong Yi, Senior Research Coordinator, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

20. The Egyptian experience focused on the factors involved in preparing a voluntary report at the beginning of 2016, when the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals came into effect. This report laid the foundation for national ownership of the process of defining priorities, formulating indicators and developing a suitable institutional framework to ensure comprehensive, coordinated and participatory review. The creation of a ministerial committee to monitor implementation, chaired by the Prime Minister and with the Minister of Investment and International Cooperation as rapporteur, had helped the process to succeed. Furthermore, the support of the United Nations (the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCWA and United Nations country team) had had a positive effect on the quality of the report and its compliance with the proposed template. Under the stipulated participatory approach, meetings with civil society had been arranged to discuss the report before the final version was adopted. The time factor had been a challenge, as had been the measurement and analysis of certain goals at the initial phase of implementation due to incomplete national data.

21. Within the framework of the Qatar National Vision 2030, the Qatari presentation focused on the adaptation of national strategies to Sustainable Development Goals and formulation of institutional structures and follow-up mechanisms to support implementation. Following adoption of the Doha Declaration on a Data Revolution in the Arab World (October 2016) and, subsequently, the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (13 to 15 December 2016), Qatar had proceeded to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals in its 2017-2022 national development plan and institutional strategy plans. Qatar had launched an initiative to develop an interactive database on the 2030 Agenda indicators, in addition to an “agenda for change” project that would act as the basis for the follow-up and review for the drafting of the country’s national voluntary review on official statistics. Under the supervision of the high-level working group established to monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Qatar would shortly publish its first periodic statistical report on sustainable development indicators.

22. The Jordanian presentation focused on “Jordan Vision 2025” and the lessons to be learned from the process of adapting the 2030 Agenda to national requirements under the institutional arrangements that Jordan had established in 2001. The Higher National Committee on Sustainable Development had established the principles of coordination, integration and cooperation among institutions. Following publication of the 2030 Agenda, the Committee had been restructured to include a number of ministries and non-governmental organizations. In addition to the gender group and human rights and freedoms group, 17 national groups had been formed to work on harmonizing the national plan with the global Agenda. Jordan had also developed more than 600 measurement indicators and was currently working on its first national voluntary review, which would be based on national development priorities, including education, youth employment, decent employment, energy, food security, health and the empowerment of women. The review would address means of implementation (Goal 17), including capacity-building, transfer of knowledge and expertise and development funding in the light of the existing social conditions in Jordan.

23. Presentations on the experience of preparing national voluntary reviews noted the importance of avoiding a piecemeal approach to the 17 Goals and 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. In order to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability at the same time, those topics should be tackled holistically. It was not enough to take on the easy goals; those issues that would bring about the desired social transformation must also be addressed. It was essential to interact with and ensure the effective participation of stakeholders at all stages when preparing

national voluntary reviews. That approach would make it possible to understand the relationship among goals, targets and real priorities, and map out the future to which all peoples aspired.

24. Subsequent discussions focused on the challenges faced in preparing national voluntary reviews and lessons to be learned. Participants highlighted the importance of accountability and the diligence required to determine baselines and national indicators. Adapting the 2030 Agenda to national and local circumstances was not an easy matter; it requires concerted effort on the part of stakeholders and strong institutions to drive and coordinate the process at all levels.

25. Participants concluded by stressing that States should endeavour to adapt the 2030 Agenda at the national and local levels. All stakeholders should be involved, including young people, civil society organizations, the private sector, science and technology centres, research institutes and universities. Institutional structures should be put in place to steer the process and ensure proper coordination and integration of roles and responsibilities. Statistical systems capable of providing credible data by which to measure progress should be put in place.

Session 4: Poverty and prosperity: the question of distribution (under the auspices of ESCWA and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development)

26. Mr. Paul Ladd, Director, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, delivering a presentation on the subject of poverty and prosperity, said that social policy should not be confined to limited interventions to combat poverty; instead, there should be a general policy covering everyone. It was important to adopt a broad definition of poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that must be studied and understood in its specific geographical context. The link between poverty and inequality, which was itself multidimensional, should also be examined. As its title suggested, the 2030 Agenda was a transformational one. In order to achieve sustainable development, the required transformation and change must include economic and social structures, social relations and patterns of employment.

27. The session was addressed by Mr. Ilcheong Yi, Senior Research Coordinator, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development; Mr. Said al-Saqri, President, Omani Economic Association; Mr. Mohammed Bilqasimi, poverty and development expert (Morocco); and Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development. The session was chaired by Mr. Oussama Safa, Head of Participation and Social Justice Section, ESCWA.

28. The presentations and discussions dealt with different dimensions of the issue of redistribution and social policies designed to eradicate poverty. Speakers underscored the need for genuine commitment to development as a holistic concept embracing a wide-range of social policies covering everyone, including policies to combat poverty. Social protection should be rights-based, and the tax system should act as a key tool for fair redistribution of income and burdens. Institutions, social dialogue and the principle of freedom all had a part to play in the successful implementation of social policies. Partnerships with the private sector and civil society were essential in order to mobilize resources. Development should leave no one behind, particularly persons with disabilities, who were one of the weakest and most marginalized groups in society. Speakers drew attention to the relationship between corruption and poverty and to the importance of national sovereignty over and proper use of natural resources as one of the requirements for eradicating poverty and spreading prosperity.

Session 5: Poverty and prosperity: inclusive growth and decent work (under the auspices of the International Labour Organization and ESCWA)

29. The session was addressed by Mr. Niranjana Sarangi, First Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Development Section, ESCWA; Shaza Ghaleb al-Jondi, United Nations Coherence and Resource Mobilization Officer, Regional Office for the Arab States, International Labour Organization; Mr. Houcine Abassi, former Secretary-General of the Tunisian General Labour Union; Dr. Abbas Korina, Secretary-General, National Council for Strategic Planning, Ministry of Presidential Affairs (Sudan). The session was chaired by Mr. Magued Osman, Director, Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research (“Baseera”) and former Minister of Communications and Information Technology (Egypt).

30. The presentations and discussions dwelt on the need to change the approach to development in the Arab region in order to give priority to inclusive economic growth that will generate decent job opportunities for all. The economic growth experienced by several Arab countries had been absorbed by population growth and had not been translated into development. The jobs that had been created did not meet the requirements of decent employment, which was a precondition for transforming growth into a development dividend. Productivity remained low, unemployment was high, and the informal sector continued to absorb the largest share of the workforce. Women’s participation in the workforce was the lowest in the world and represented a common challenge for all the countries of the region.

31. Speakers drew attention to major problems in the governance of the labour market. Privatization took place in an environment dominated by corruption, which weakened the contribution of the private sector to development. The Arab States did not pay enough attention to employment and workforce protection policies. International conventions were most often not enforced, even once they had been ratified. In many Arab countries, trade unions were not recognized in practice. Given the lack of freedom of assembly and freedom to negotiate and engage in genuine collective dialogue, the preconditions for decent employment simply did not exist. Furthermore, several factors, such as corruption and debt, caused resources to be misallocated or misused.

32. Participants stressed the need to transition from thinking nationally to thinking regionally and from short-term focus on particular sectors to strategic thinking. There was a need to remove the contradiction between economic goals and social goals and between State economic policies and their impact on people’s lives. Social dialogue and the formation of economic and social councils or equivalent bodies with expanded roles was an essential first step to achieving sustainable development and providing decent jobs. One participant emphasized the importance of a rights-based approach, especially as States had committed to economic and social rights under international conventions. Such action could represent an effective framework for directing, evaluating and monitoring compliance with policies, including decent employment conditions.

Session 6: Building prosperous societies through peace and stability (under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and ESCWA)

33. The session was addressed by HE Mr. Mohammed al-Maitami, Minister of Industry and Trade (Yemen); Mr. Samir Abdullah, Senior Researcher, Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) and former Minister of Planning and Minister of Labour in the Palestinian Government; Dr. Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCWA; Ms. Razan Zuayter, Chair, Arab Network for Food Solidarity and founder, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature. The session was

chaired by Ms. Itidal al-Mujbari, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (Cawthar) (Tunisia).

34. The presentations and discussions dealt with the instability of the Arab region and its effect on development, poverty eradication and the realization of prosperity, particularly in Syria, Palestine and Yemen. Speakers stressed the need to distinguish among the occupation in Palestine, war and conflict in other countries and cases of limited conflict and instability. There were numerous foreign and local actors, and the outbreak of war or conflict was not a choice. Occupation, wars and crises exacerbated poverty and undermines prospects for prosperity, while peace, security and stability were preconditions for sustainable development. However, that does not mean that development actors should hold off until the situation changed. Efforts to achieve development, even under difficult conditions, could be turned into means of curbing violence, securing the foundations of sustainable peace and addressing certain root economic and social causes that could give rise to violence and extremism.

35. Participants stressed the importance of institutions: institutional weakness and the dominance of closed and exclusionary systems were causes of crisis. Conversely, building inclusive, transparent and fair systems of governance and effective institutions helped resolve crises and bring about sustainable peace. It was important to listen to people and learn from their astonishing resilience in the midst of the difficult conditions in the region — particularly the women who had preserved what remained of the social fabric. Direct intervention plans should be formulated, combining relief and development interventions with a belief in the people's ability to build the future. Civil society had a role to play in supporting the peace process and reconstruction.

36. Palestine's long experience under occupation showed that fragmenting action plans and reducing them to the political sphere did not produce the desired results. In order to foster resilience, strategies to confront occupation and conflict must incorporate all aspects of development without exception, including improving production, job opportunities and service provision for all. Speakers highlighted the importance of human rights, the right to development and international law in providing a theoretical and practical framework to resolve crises, ensure sovereignty over national natural resources and build sustainable peace.

Session 7: Achieving prosperity by mobilizing the means of implementation at regional level

37. The session was chaired by Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development and addressed by Ms. Zohra Ettaik, Director, National Agency for Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and the Environment (Morocco); Mr. Mustafa Khawaja, Director, Department of Registers and Statistical Monitoring, Central Bureau of Statistics (Palestine); Ms. Fatna Lakrani, Head, Department of Relations with the Arab World, Africa, Asia and Oceania, Customs and Indirect Taxation Administration (Morocco).

38. The session focused on ways to achieve sustainable development and prosperity through regional action to mobilize the means of implementation, including financial resources, human and technological capacities, commercial resources, data and statistical systems and partnerships with civil society, the private sector, universities and research centres. It was difficult to effect change unless measures were taken to increase cooperation, make optimal use of the region's capacities and resources, and ensure that the statistics essential for sound development planning were available.

39. The Moroccan experience of formulating and implementing renewable and clean energy strategies highlighted the importance of developing such technology and ensuring its transfer across the Arab region, as was the case in Africa, producing sustainable and clean energy, protecting natural resources and reducing energy costs and, hence, the price of services. Participants stressed the role of the education system, particularly higher education and scientific research, in supporting the development of knowledge appropriate to contemporary needs.

40. Reliable regional data were a vital basis for sound policies; yet lack of figures, contradictory figures and difficulty in accessing statistical data were common regional challenges. Indicators commensurate with the region's priorities should be formulated. One presentation addressed the Palestinian experience and national efforts to build a statistical system that could combine all relevant sources, ensure consistency of approaches and methodologies for quantification and classification, and mobilize key partnerships with civil society was noted.

41. Speakers called for effective Arab participation in the high-level group established to determine and monitor global indicators and link them to the goals of the 2030 Agenda. One recommendation was that an agreement should be reached on the creation of an Arab information bank dedicated to the 241 indicators of the 2030 Agenda. Such a regional mechanism would monitor progress, analyse regional trends, identify weak points and correct trajectories.

42. Speakers addressed the role of business in promoting Arab integration. Commercial relations between regional States might more readily be described as competitive than holistic. The focus on competing production sectors diminished States' capacity to cooperate, stimulate trade, open up their economies to the outside world, create business opportunities outside the Arab region and leverage migration to achieve development. Another recommendation stressed the need to boost knowledge-based efforts and field studies to permit development of legal frameworks and industrial and commercial policies to promote integration, with due regard for Arab countries' resources and production and consumption capacities.

Session 8: Moving forward: dialogue on the key messages to emerge from the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and future steps

43. The session began with a discussion of the aforementioned recommendations and approaches. Participants highlighted the relevance of the Arab regional level in the 2030 Agenda. A holistic regional approach to the 2030 Agenda should be adopted, based on the numerous processes that were currently in place at the national and regional levels.

44. Participants called for Arab regional goals, targets and a concise list of associated indicators to be derived from regional priorities and the recommendations on regional integration. A programme of activities should be formulated to complement and dovetail with the other processes. Several activities should be implemented in the period before the next Arab Forum in 2018, and a report on progress made (the package of proposed activities appears in section 1(f), above, on key messages to the high-level political forum on sustainable development) should be submitted.

c. Special sessions

45. Five special sessions were held during the forum, dealing in depth with certain goals and development dimensions, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [70/299](#) concerning follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, which identified a number of goals for review in 2017. In addition to Goals 1 and 17, which were discussed in the plenary

sessions of the Arab Forum, three special sessions dealt with Goals 2, 3 and 5 and two sessions dealt with topics covering a number of sectors of maximum importance for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the need to incorporate the environmental dimension and take population issues into account in development strategies and plans. The following is a summary of the most important points raised in the special sessions:

1. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a gender perspective: the gender dimensions of poverty and prosperity (under the auspices of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the League of Arab States and ESCWA)

46. The session was addressed by Her Excellency Ms. Bassima Hakkaoui, Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development (Morocco); Ms. Niama Jenina, expert in gender equality issues; Dr. Salma Nims, Secretary-General, National Committee for Women's Affairs (Jordan); and Ms. Mehrinaz el-Awady, Director, ESCWA Centre for Women. Her Excellency Ms. Bassima Hakkaoui delivered an address on behalf of the Arab Women Organization. The session was chaired by Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director for Arab States, UN-Women.

47. The session addressed gender equality issues in the context of eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity. Experiences from Jordan and Morocco were presented, alongside the regional visions of the League of Arab States and ESCWA. The discussion reviewed the success of several Arab countries, particularly Tunisia and Morocco, in making progress toward gender equality, in addition to the increased level of participation of women in other Arab countries. A review of all the indicators showed that the gender gap persisted in many areas, and significant discrepancies exist between countries. Several common problems still existed and needed attention, particularly the low level of participation of women in the workforce and in politics, the persistence of violence and harmful practices against women, and the lack of an adequate legislative framework to promote progress toward gender equality consistent with aspirations. Education and health indicators had improved, but gaps continued to exist.

48. Gender equality and women's empowerment should be taken into account. Women and girls should be protected, particularly in situations of conflict, asylum and displacement. Women bore additional responsibilities where protection and empowerment were lacking. Due attention should be given to Sustainable Development Goal 5, and national plans should be formulated on the basis. Because women's empowerment was a standard for progress in overall sustainable development, the gender equality perspective should be mainstreamed into all strategies and aspects of development.

49. Contributors drew attention to the important role of regional organizations, such as ESCWA, UN-Women and the League of Arab States, in organizing action at regional level, especially the formulation of a regional vision based on analytical review of national strategies. The latter had failed to adequately tackle women's inability to access and control resources or the topic of unpaid labour. The process of national and regional adaptation must include a clear definition of priorities, including ridding legal frameworks of discriminatory provisions, formulating an effective monitoring and follow-up system based on appropriate indicators and harmonizing national and regional actions with those taken at the international level.

2. Food security in the Arab region: opportunities and challenges (under the auspices of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations)

50. The session was addressed by Ms. Amira Qarnas, Chair, United Nations Committee on World Food Security; His Excellency Mohammed Bin Abdullah al-Rumaihi, Minister of Municipality and Environment (Qatar); Mr. Mohamed Ait Kadi, President, General Council of Agricultural Development (Morocco); and Mr. Mohammed al-Jamaani, Secretary-General, Ministry of Agriculture (Jordan). The session was chaired by Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA and Mr. Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, Regional Representative, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

51. Contributors drew attention to the importance of food security, which overlapped with a number of challenges facing the region, such as development, poverty eradication and the promotion of prosperity, particularly in the light of the changes in the Arab world. The strenuous efforts that had been made on all fronts have been inadequate to meet the challenges of war, which has paralysed farming and the capacity for food production. That was the case not only in those Arab countries suffering from starvation, such as Yemen and Somalia, but also such countries as the Sudan and Iraq, which had previously been known as the breadbasket of the Arab world. The agricultural sector has an important role to play in creating jobs, and its contribution to the gross domestic product must be boosted. Natural resources, particularly water, also played a significant part in promoting security and stability. Sustainable agriculture and sustainable patterns of production and consumption should be promoted.

52. The Arab world had the potential and capacity to guarantee food security; but proper exploitation depended on policy, strategy and planning. Speakers called for implementation of the plan drawn up by League of Arab States. Food waste was another concern. Some 30 per cent of the food produced was not consumed, and that enormous amount would be enough to feed 80 million hungry people. Technology, scientific research, good governance and regional and international cooperation all had a decisive role to play in addressing problems of food security in the Arab region and must be mobilized alongside the means of implementation when formulating regional strategies. It was essential to adopt an approach linking water, energy and food security at regional level.

3. The holistic approach and environmental dimension in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, ESCWA, League of Arab States and United Nations Human Settlements Programme)

53. The session was addressed by Ms. Shahira Wahbi, Environment Department, League of Arab States; Mr. Zaghoul Samhan (Palestine), representative of the Joint Committee on the Environment and Development in the Arab World; Ms. Katja Schäfer, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; Mr. Moulay Hafiz Kabiri, High Commission for Water and Forests and the Fight against Desertification; Mr. Slimane Maliki, Secretariat of State for Sustainable Development (Morocco); and Ms. Mounya Braham, sustainable development expert (Tunisia). The session was chaired by Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA and statements were summarized by Ms. Melanie Hutchinson, Regional Coordinator, United Nations Environment Programme.

54. Speakers stressed the importance of incorporating the environmental dimension in sustainable development plans and strategies at local, national and regional levels. There was no shortage of regional strategies and plans, but implementation was poor. Participants wondered whether, following adoption of the

2030 Agenda, the mainstreaming of the environmental dimension had moved forward or back. Participants agreed that the environmental dimension was the weakest aspect of sustainable development in the Arab region, as noted in the outcome document of the Preparatory Meeting for the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (Cairo, 23 and 24 April 2017), which highlighted recommendations for the sustainable development of natural resources.

55. The discussion addressed the subject of urban settlements and their role in promoting growth and prosperity. It was pointed out that cities consumed a large amount of energy and produced a high level of emissions, which were a major cause of environmental pollution. It was therefore essential to understand the challenges posed by urban settlements and move toward sound and sustainable urban policies in the region.

56. Legislation should be adopted to mainstream the environmental dimension in development plans in order to ensure that all stakeholders (governments, investors, ministries and so on) were committed to the principles of sustainable development, and that economic activity did not exhaust natural resources. One presentation examined the successful experience of Tunisia and Morocco in that regard. Discussion examined the serious environmental challenges posed by war and conflict and the huge costs of occupation, not to mention the historic neglect of the environmental dimension. In order to mainstream environmental dimension, it would be useful to legislate and institutionalize the process; put in place effective mechanisms to make implementation and accountability mandatory; enhance relations with the private sector to enforce environmental responsibility; and establish clear timetables for implementing the process in conjunction with capacity-building and optimal use of technology and data.

4. Demographic dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (under the auspices of the United Nations Population Fund)

57. The following participated in the session: Mr. Magued Osman, Director, Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research (“Baseera”) and former Minister of Communications and Information Technology (Egypt); Mr. Ali al-Mutlaq, Higher Population Council (Jordan); Mr. Daoud al-Deek, Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Development (Palestine); and Mr. Marwan Bilarabi, youth affairs expert. The session was chaired by Ms. Hala Youssef, Advisor, Arab States Regional Office, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

58. Contributions stressed that approaching the Sustainable Development Goals from a population perspective would help to ensure commitment to the principle of “leaving no one behind”. Because economic migration was one of the drivers of economic and social development, the issue should be incorporated in development policy at the national, regional and international levels. It was important to work within the framework of the 2030 Agenda to coordinate national plans in source and destination countries and formulate programmes incorporating migration issues in Arab States’ development process. Given the high rate of urbanization in the Arab countries, internal migration should also be included.

59. However, the demographic dividend is not automatically guaranteed. In order to benefit from it, countries must make targeted investments and formulate appropriate policies and interventions at national and regional levels. Policies must cover the following elements: health and welfare; education and skills development; economic empowerment, employment and entrepreneurship; and youth, governance and rights. Particular importance must also be granted to demographic changes, population projections, changes in the age structure of the population, population displacement and migration. Given that young people made up more than 30 per

cent of the population of the Arab countries, addressing the dividend by investing in youth would have an impact on all population groups.

60. Speakers called on governments, United Nations organizations and regional committees to continue joint action to implement the roadmap on harnessing the demographic dividend in the Arab States within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, upgrade the statistical effort and adopt an appropriate list of indicators to improve the monitoring and follow-up of population issues in particular and development in general.

5. Poverty and health: achieving Goal 3 in the Arab Region (under the auspices of the World Health Organization)

61. The following participated in the session: Ms. Rayana Bou Hakka, Director, Country and Partnership Support Unit, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, World Health Organization (WHO); Mr. Abdulsalam Boutayyeb, health and poverty expert (Morocco); Ms. Sakina Bouraoui, Director, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (“Cawthar”); Mr. Abdullah Sayyid Ahmed, Dean, Faculty of Public Health (Sudan); and Ms. Sylvana Lakkis, Chair, Arab Regional Office, Disabled Peoples’ International. The session was chaired by Mr. Yves Souteyrand, Resident Representative (Morocco), WHO.

62. The session dealt with general issues of health, development and poverty. Presentations examined the experience of Jordan, Sudan and Morocco. Specific issues, such as disability and women’s health were also addressed. Speakers stressed that improving health required a holistic approach. The public needed to be convinced that health was not the exclusive purview of the Ministry of Health, but required the cooperation of other ministries. Parliamentarians should be involved in the formulation of health policy, as proper and effective planning is vital to achieve balanced and equitable health outcomes.

63. Speakers drew attention to the need to recognize the significant discrepancies between countries and within the same country regarding access to health care services. Holistic health policies must take into account the needs of marginalized groups and the weakest elements in society, including persons with disabilities and those carrying the HIV/AIDS virus. By rectifying inequalities in health care provision, the Sustainable Development Goals provided a genuine opportunity to do more than merely improve national averages. Health policies should also guarantee the availability and proper distribution of qualified medical staff and seek to develop research and skills in priority areas, such as disability and the health priorities of various population groups.

64. The gender equality dimension set forth in Goal 3 on health should be mainstreamed in all Goals. In that context, three major challenges needed to be addressed, namely child marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against women. In order to ensure follow-up, progress made in those areas, particularly regarding violence against women, should be included in national voluntary reviews. Speakers called for cooperation among health actors to be boosted in order to develop agreed methodologies and databases that would help build knowledge usable by stakeholders to identify, study, monitor and address the social determinants of poverty.

d. Concluding session

65. The 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development concluded with a press statement read by Ms. Karima al-Korri, stating that participants had agreed on a number of ideas and measures to energize the regional dimension of the 2030 Agenda by working to translate the region’s priorities into measurable, regional

goals. Those ideas amounted to a regional executive programme for sustainable development up to 2030 to which all stakeholders were able to commit. Regional follow-up and review mechanisms would be a key element of that programme. The programme would begin to take shape in the following weeks and would be ready for presentation to the next Forum in 2018.

66. The concluding statement emphasized that participants supported the Palestinian people in its endeavour to end Israeli occupation, and supported the just humanitarian demands under international human rights law and international humanitarian law of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli jails.

67. At the end of the Forum, ESCWA, as the organizing body, stated that the participatory approach was essential to the success of the Forum. All participants were being involved preparing the final version of the messages to be submitted to the high-level political forum.

68. His Excellency Mr. Lahcen Daoudi, Minister of General Affairs and Governance of Morocco, delivering a concluding address, stated that regional efforts should be intensified in order to bolster development at a time when the Arab world was going through major changes and facing serious challenges. Morocco welcomed the opportunity to host the forthcoming Forum in 2018. Dr Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA, thanked Morocco and all participants for their valuable contributions to the success of the Forum. The latter would act as a platform to drive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region.

III. Participants

69. More than 150 high-level participants attended the Forum, including representatives of the organizing bodies, namely ESCWA, the League of Arab States, United Nations organizations working in the Arab region (members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism) and the Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco, as well as representatives of governments, key groups, regional bodies concerned with sustainable development, Arab monetary funds and several Arab parliamentarians. Correspondents from a number of media organizations also attended.

70. The United Nations was represented by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the International Organization for Migration.

71. More than 70 delegates from 15 Arab States participated, 13 of whom are members of ESCWA, namely the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Iraq, the State of Palestine, the State of Qatar, Libya, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Republic of Yemen, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

and Djibouti. Delegates from a number of specialized ministries attended, including general affairs and governance, planning, foreign affairs and international cooperation, social development and labour, solidarity, women and the family, rural development, administrative development, finance, trade, industry, energy and minerals, health, municipality and environment, water, agriculture, sustainable development, equipment and transport, and higher education, as well as from several central bureaux of statistics, national population councils and economic, social and environmental councils. Parliamentarians from Palestine, Egypt and Morocco attended.

72. Key groups and regional and international organizations represented included the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED), Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Arab Network for Food Sovereignty, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Arab Women Organization, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (Cawthar), Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization, Transparency International, Saudi Fund for Development, Islamic Development Bank, the Arab office of Disabled Peoples' International, Kabira Women's Group, Omani Economic Association, Tunisian General Labour Union, Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research ("Baseera"), Collectif pour la Promotion des Droits des Personnes en Situation de Handicap, Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Moroccan Evaluation Association, Tarika Association for Sustainable Development, Network for Animal Welfare and Sustainable Development (RAPAD Morocco). Correspondents from the following media bodies were present: Observatoire sur le Moyen-Orient et l'Afrique du Nord, *Le Maghreb* newspaper, *Alghad* newspaper, Agence Maghreb Arabe Press and Food Magazine.
