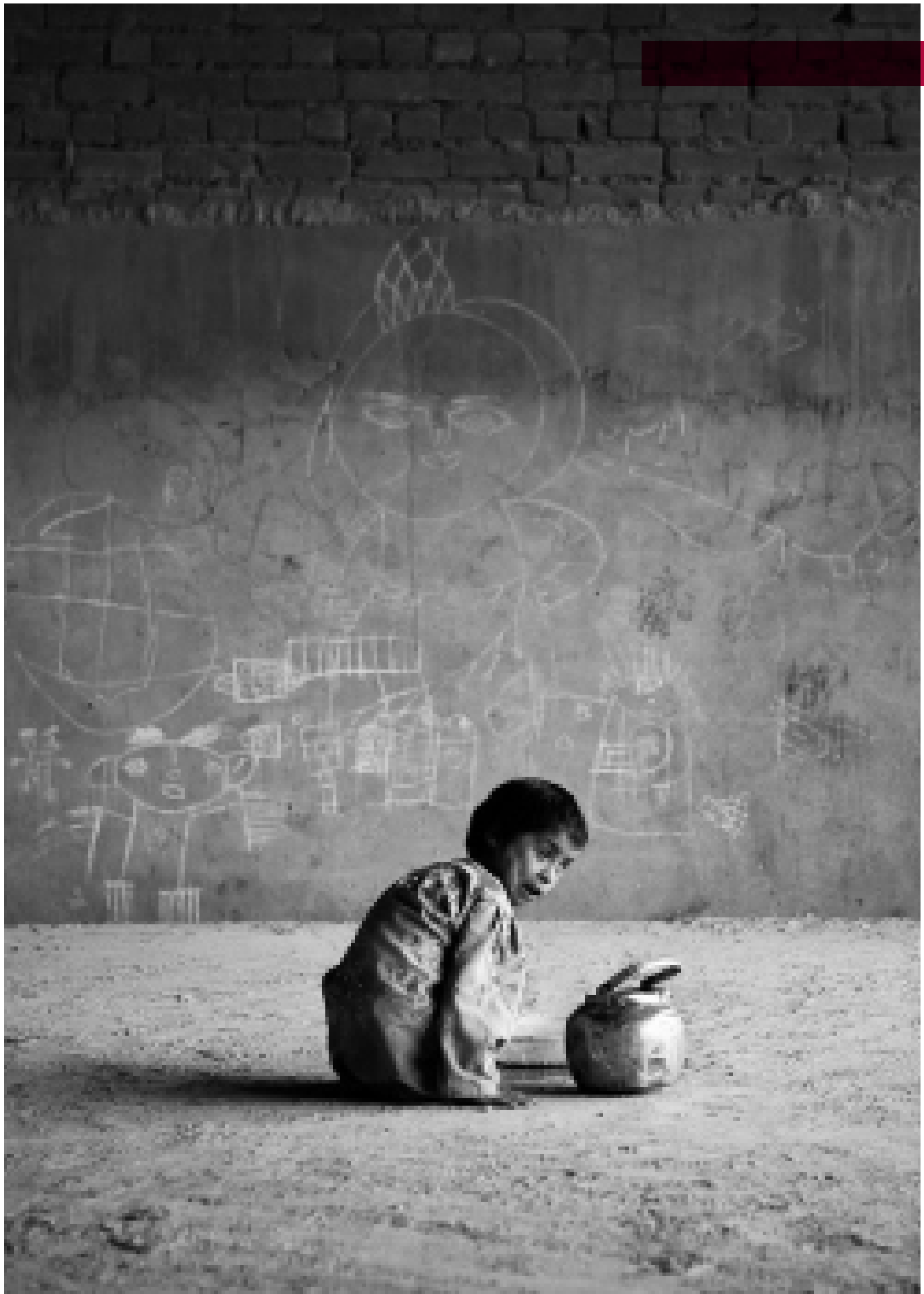


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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية



Reflections on the **Agenda 2030** from a Civil Society perspective



Introduction

Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

Ziad Abdel-Samad

The outcome of the global process the agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) constitutes a shift in the understanding of development, especially in defining the roles of the different stakeholders in the development. For example, it proposes giving the business sector the key role, being a contributor to economic growth and generating jobs. This comes before the adoption of a Binding treaty on Business and Human Rights.

The process also reflects a new paradigm for the “global partnership for development”. The latter has been based on the following five pillars:

- Promoting fair trade to help developing countries in improving their economic performance and public revenues.
- Reconsidering foreign debts, which are consuming large public budget revenues.
- Increasing development aid in quantity and quality (the aid effectiveness process was launched in Rome 2003).
- Speeding up technology transfer to help developing countries overcome the challenges of improving development tools.
- Addressing the issue of medicines for dangerous illnesses, which is part of the rich nations commitments towards developing ones.

The paradigm shift in the declaration on Sustainable Development (New York 2015) from “Global Partnership for Development” towards “Global Partnerships for development” gives the business sector the leading role. The declaration refrains from adopting explicit time limits and clear indicators concerning the goals on fair trade and debt relief and neglecting the regulations on illicit capital flows. Moreover, the “aid effectiveness” process has shifted in Buson 2011 to “development effectiveness” where only the governments in the developing countries are accountable rather than applying the principle of mutual accountability on both donors and beneficiaries within a clear understanding of partnership and democratic national ownership.

The Donors’ approaches operating in the Arab region, in their expressed priorities and strategies, reflect weariness and sometimes unjustified despair with the role of civil society. They believe that civil society failed to achieve structural changes after the Arab spring; hence, they shifted the support towards entrepreneurship initiatives to help individuals and the business sector carry out development projects and programs. The partnership between the public and private sectors is being promoted to facilitate free trade, investments and market access.

This is the essence of new paradigm promoted by the mainstream thinking. Lately donors’ priorities in the region was limited to humanitarian intervention to help refugees and victims of wars and conflicts and to dealing with security concerns in countries torn by wars and conflicts especially in “the neighborhood” countries targeted by large numbers of refugees; instead of addressing the root causes of the conflicts and crises. A high percentage of development aid (ODA) is earmarked to the business sector to boost trade and investments, while the remaining is spent on some development services and needs. Aid is being decreased for support and advocacy groups on public policies.

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) believes that the civil and social movements have not stopped since 2010, as a result of the struggle for decades claiming freedom and justice. This movement is also the only option to restore balance to society in the face of old régime, traditional, conservative and radical religious forces, which set out to hinder progress in the democratic construction of the civil and modern state. Reversing support for the democratic movements, will inevitably lead to their weakening and limit their capabilities to build a promising future full of justice and respect for human rights.

As part of these efforts, ANND participated in the Arab process on the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in the Arab Economic and Social Summit organized by the League of Arab States every two years. Since 2009 it stopped after 2013 and it will proceed in 2019. Most of the summit’s proceedings are dedicated to dialogue on development challenges and the role of partner parties. Despite the limited participation of civil society, every time the summit was held, ANND organized parallel forums, which issued recommendations addressed to the summit. These forums, were organized by ANND in partnership with the League of Arab States (LAS), particularly with the Civil Society Directorate, and with the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA).

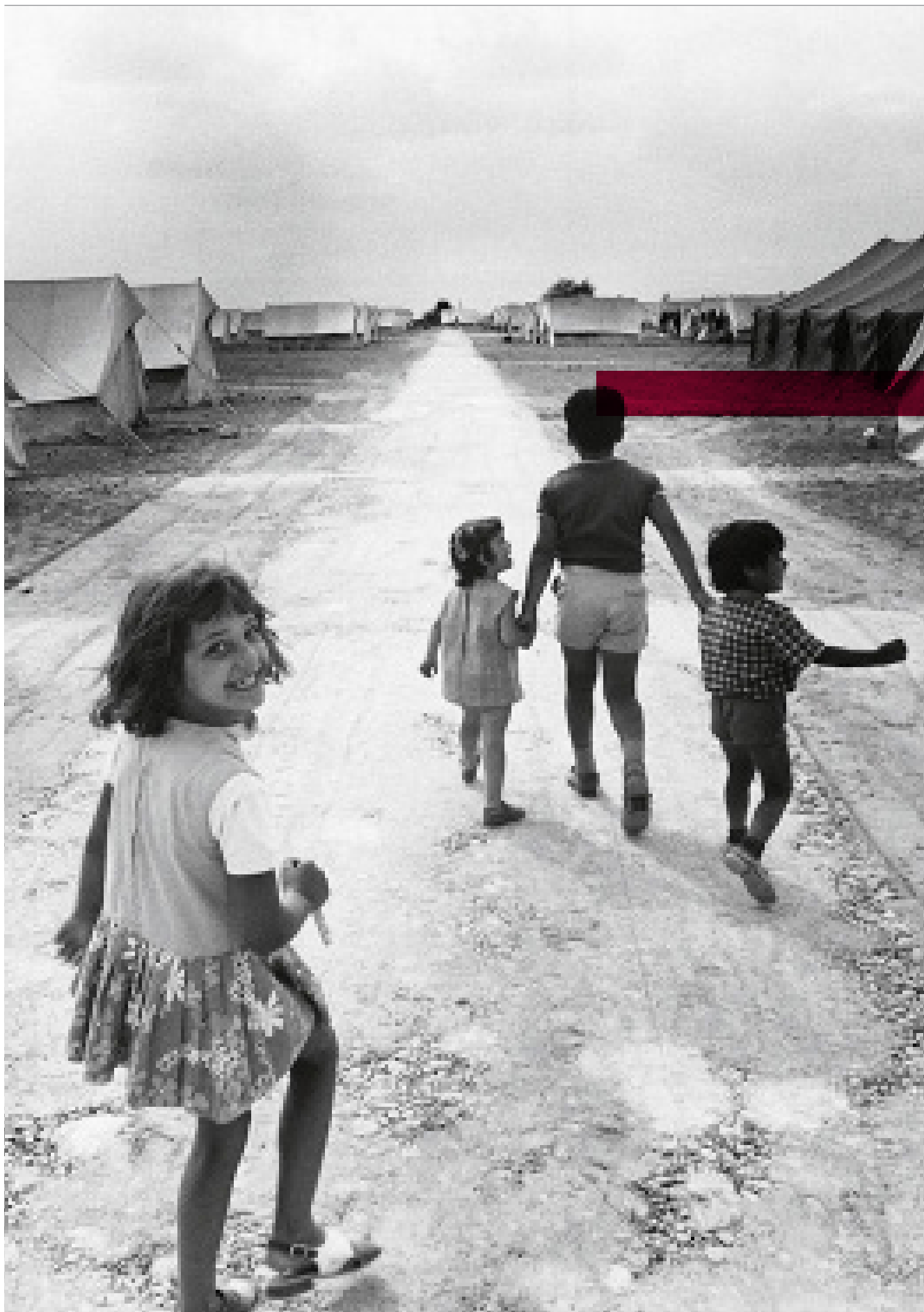
ANND organized in participation with LAS and ESCWA in parallel with the civil forums for sustainable development starting 2013 and its been organizing it annually since.

They include analyses of most prominent challenges and tackle on some elements of the alternative development paradigm, which are the basis for dialogue between development partners and different stockholders.



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PREAMBLE

The new millennium has witnessed the spread of several acute and multidimensional crises. Such crises have exposed our global society to the insecurities that underlie free and integrated markets, and further, have created new risks to the environment and our future supply of finite resources such as water and energy. The effect has so far led to increasing global poverty, inequality and hunger. The international community's inability to address these changing realities has largely been a product of weak systems of global governance sustained by the absence of accountability and fair distribution mechanisms.

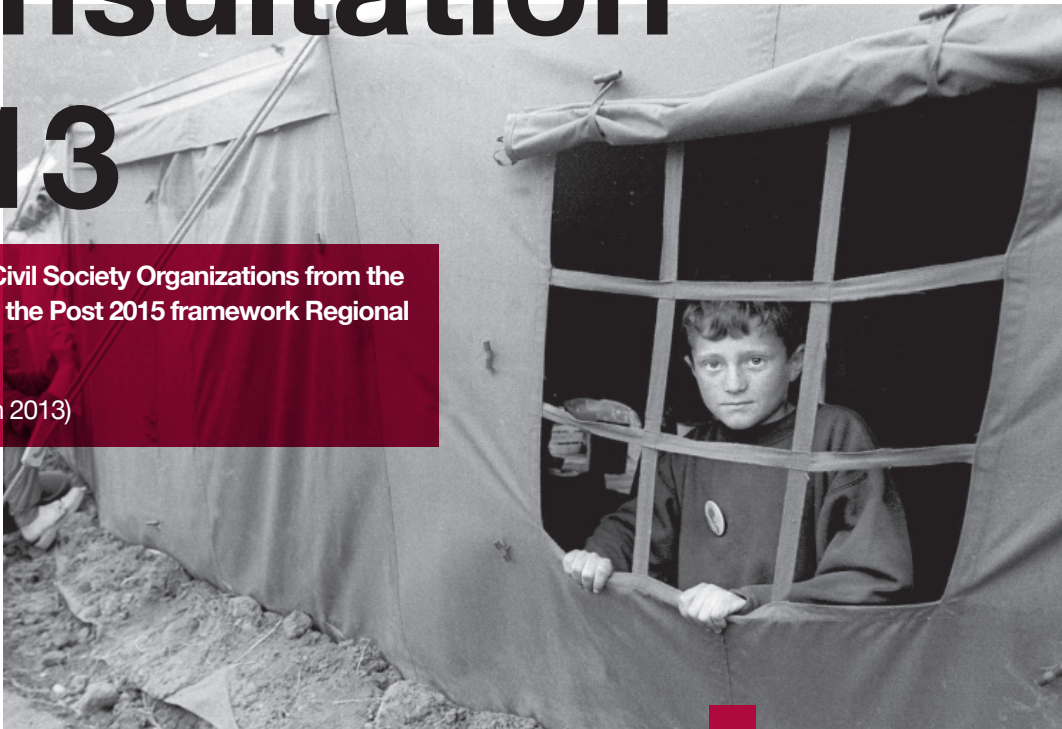
The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are no longer viable pillars for the international development agenda. Though the objectives were noble—reducing child mortality and poverty, ensuring universal education, promoting gender equality, and so on—the steps toward implementation were set without social participation and without attention to local context. Thus, with the deadline for implementing the MDGs fast approaching, global and regional initiatives have refocused their efforts to establish a post-2015 development agenda that is less quantitative based and emphasizes the core values of human rights, equality and sustainability. The end goal, as noted by the UN in 2012, will be to create a “positive force for all the world's peoples of present and future generations.”

There have been parallel efforts to determine ongoing priorities and how to finance their development moving forward. In July 2015, members of the international community including civil society, government, trade union and other participants convened in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) to review the current process for the UN's Financing for

Development (Ffd) and discuss proposals to reform and rebalance the international financial system for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In light of the Arab uprisings in 2011, development stakeholders in the Arab region are particularly concerned with the future relationship between international and national development agendas. They understand that citizens who came out in protest called for not only the end of exclusionary political and economic systems internal to the region, but also external forces that sustained and benefitted from these systems. Thus, those involved in the post-2015 and Ffd negotiations are promoting a reliable development agenda that looks beyond nominal goals and quantitative indicators to align global governance systems with national policy choices. Such policy choices must be based on a new social contract between citizens and the state that promotes progressive policies safeguarding economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

The documents contained in this pamphlet shed light on the specific concerns and recommendations that were presented at regional consultations in Beirut in March, 2013, July, 2014 and April, 2015, in addition to the recent conference in Addis Ababa in July, 2015. The hope is that these insights will further the finalization of a conceptual framework for a new era of human-oriented development across the Arab region and the world.



■ Consultation 2013

Declaration of Civil Society Organizations from the Arab Region on the Post 2015 framework Regional Consultation

(Beirut, 14 March 2013)

General Background

In the year 2000, the Millennium Declaration (MD) put forward a set of challenges to global development efforts and that outlined a "collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level". The Millennium Declaration called for global policies and measures, to address the needs of developing countries and economies in transition so that all can benefit from the positive effects of globalization. It contained a statement of values, principles and objectives for the international development agenda for the 21st century. Most importantly, the MD established a strong link between Peace, Security, Democracy, respect of Human Rights and development efforts seeking to achieve social justice, eradicate poverty and create employment.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that followed were a set of negotiated, specific and measurable targets that focused on poverty, hunger, unemployment, education, health and infectious diseases, the status of women and the environment. The goals were mainly addressed to developing countries, while they included one goal (Goal 8) that addressed global collective cooperation to achieve the first seven goals. This 8TH goal focused on global partnerships for development and aimed to advance an open and rule-based trading and financial system, address the needs of least developed countries, and deal comprehensively with the debt of developing countries. Furthermore, it entailed cooperation with pharmaceutical companies and the private sector so as to provide access to affordable and essential drugs and to make available the benefits of new technologies to developing countries¹.

The MDGs include quantitative targets and objectives that are easy to comprehend. The good intentions of the MDGs are hard to disagree with. However, the accountability of the international community and national governments in their implementation has been limited. As a result, the MDGs did not serve the larger strategic purpose of achieving sustainable development and addressing interlinked global challenges such as "eradicating poverty, ensuring environmental sustainability, achieving economic equity, ensuring gender equality, tackling climate change, building resilience, managing equitable distribution of natural resources, realizing human rights, and reducing inequality between and within populations²."

Conceptually, the MDGs present a desired outcome but do not outline the policy and process needed to achieve such outcomes. The MDGs do not fully consider the

diverse positions that different countries are starting from in their developmental pathways. Moreover, the MDGs are laid out in terms of aggregates and averages that often conceal distributional outcomes. This poses a number of questions about the different goals including the effectiveness of the role of global partnership for development (Goal 8). For example, the intentions of this goal to provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries is undermined by the specificities of cooperating with pharmaceutical companies, precisely those that prohibit anyone from calling their abusive monopoly into question. Similarly, the intention to make available the benefits of new technologies in developing countries is conditioned by cooperation with the private sector that is often not interested in less than competitive pricing. Last but not least, Goal 8 calls for dealing comprehensively with the mounting debts of developing countries³, yet there is no guidance on the tools with which to go about such a process and within what framework³.

The MDGs are also set out in proportions, such as "half the number of people," and they address a number of critical human development issues such as literacy and the preservation of biodiversity. However, some of the indicators are inappropriate or misleading, and their formulation reveals the ways in which the MDGs have been misunderstood, misused and misappropriated. For instance, goal 3 in the MDGs, "Promote gender equality and empower women", does not include indicators signifying progress. Economic empowerment without reproductive rights and the corresponding health care will leave women as less than FULL citizens. Furthermore, educating females without protecting them from SEXUAL HARASSMENT and gender based VIOLENCE will hinder girls and women from fully utilizing their educational qualifications⁴. Similarly the MDGs emphasize increases in the rate of economic growth yet do not include policies or measures for redistribution of assets that would ensure that the poor can benefit from such growth.

The outbreak of the global crisis, in its multiple dimensions, financial, economic, climate, energy and food prices, revealed the imbalance in the nature of the existing global trading and financial system. It became clear the extent to which the available systems were geared toward the enrichment of a select few on the global market at the expense of the larger portion of the population. More critically, it highlighted once more that achieving the goals is not just a matter of funding and commitments rather, it is an issue of patterns and policies at the macro-economic, financial and social development levels. In this sense it emphasized the need to return to the underlying principles of the millennium declaration as a conceptual framework of analysis that sought to identify the linkages between different sets of challenges and their impact on development.

1. *We Can End Poverty 2015, Millennium Development Goals*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml>

2. *Beyond 2015, Sustainable Development Goals and the relationship to a post 2015 global development framework: a Beyond 2015 discussion paper*. Available at: <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/Beyond%202015%20MDG-SDG%20relationship.pdf>

3. Amin, S. 2013. „The Millennium Development Goals: A Critique from the South“. *Monthly Review*. Available at: <http://monthlyreview.org/2006/03/01/the-millennium-development-goals-a-critique-from-the-south>

4. Ariffin, J. 2004. „Gender Critiques of the Millennium Development Goals : An Overview and an Assessment.

The Developmental Picture in the Arab Region

As for the Arab Region, whilst the global development agenda was focused on the remaining five years of the MDGs, citizens in Arab countries took to the streets to say that the current economic and political systems had failed them. Popularly labeled the “Arab Spring,” these uprisings deposed a number of presidents in some countries and led to civil conflict in others. Demands by Arab citizens focused on **dignity, participation and social justice**. In other words Arab citizens were calling for an end to all forms of exclusion; be it economic, political, social or cultural. Development, they stated, cannot take place without freedom of individuals and of nations particularly in a region that is still suffering from the longest occupation in modern history. The continued Israeli occupation of Palestine and its expansionist settler policies has had tremendous and devastating impact on peace, stability and development in Palestine and surrounding countries.

These demands also demonstrated the extent to which the neo liberal development models implemented under the undemocratic regimes of the Arab region had effectively produced poverty, inequality and unemployment; this despite some promising indicators in some of those same countries in rates of economic growth and the achievement of the MDGs. Indeed, the economies of Arab countries adopted models of growth that neglected developmental objectives and peoples’ economic and social rights. Policy makers prioritized integration in the global economy through trade and investment liberalization, borrowing, expansion of privatization deals and public-private partnerships, and overall economic deregulation. Most countries achieved economic growth; however poverty, unemployment, and inequities grew dramatically. Markets were not working the way they should and the relevant political system was not correcting these failures.

Most of the countries in the region are facing multifaceted challenges particularly the imperative to move from a rentier model of governance toward a democratic and productive state. This can only take place if governance is based on the respect of Human Rights, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, integrity and responsibility. The transition toward such a state needs to consider the rights and responsibilities of citizenship a key pillar and focus on the empowerment

of citizens, by enhancing knowledge as one of the top priorities, gender equality, equity and justice.

Finally, such a state would by necessity be based on a new social contract promoting participation, enhancing competitiveness, adopting policies for fair redistribution of wealth and resources and providing all the necessary public services with a good quality.

■ *In this regard, this statement, issued during the regional Arab CSO consultation, outlines the priorities they have identified for the post-2015 development framework. These build on the new emerging challenges mentioned above and the lessons learnt from the initial MDGs process’ failures and gaps.*

Recommendations by Civil Society Organizations in the Arab Region to the post-2015 Framework

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- **The post 2015 development framework should be based on the main overview suggested by the Millennium Declaration; the MD** underlined the positive link between peace and security and democratic governance at all levels, including the global, regional, national and local, with efforts to realize social justice. As such it is imperative to reiterate this link in the post 2015 agenda as a key element of its conceptual framework and adopt the necessary themes, goals and plans for implementation.
- **The Post-2015 development framework must be based on a comprehensive approach to development that takes political, social, economic, environmental and cultural rights into account.** Over the past few decades, economic growth has been taken by some as an indicator of development. As the Arab uprisings and the Occupy Wall Street movements have shown, economic growth does not by necessity lead to development. A more comprehensive approach to growth is needed; one that is inclusive and re-distributional and ensures that the elements of this growth benefit all of society.
- **Following from the above, the Post 2015 Agenda should be based on a new citizen-centered development paradigm:** The central role given to economic growth within development must be set aside. The post-2015 agenda must adopt a multidimensional and comprehensive approach. In this regard, we need new economic priorities based on productive sectors that **generate sustainable and decent jobs and a reconsideration of the regulatory role of the State**, which is mainly entitled to protect the rights of citizens, shaping policies focused on fair redistribution, including through taxation and the provision of services. The post-2015 framework must adopt a **NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN CITIZENS**

- **and the State based on the human rights framework and protection of citizenship.** Furthermore, the development agenda should promote different objectives of national economics and a move away from growth-led policies and export-led growth towards the creation of sustainable productive sectors with an added value and jobs in agriculture, services, tourism, manufacturing, etc... in order to build productive societies. This necessitates the protection of the needed “policy space” that allows for the elaboration of national strategies, the adoption of macro-economic choices and provides the possibility of implementing them according to national needs and priorities.
- on the core principles of equal participation and common and differential responsibility.
- **The main focus of the debate should shift from merely setting new goals and targets for post-2015 towards the analysis of key issues and means of implementation to tackle them:** The MDGs over-simplified the discussion on development framework as the goals and targets set were not incorporated within a broader development framework. Therefore, we need to shift focus from thinking of new sets of numerical targets towards designing the goals and objectives to capture the various critical conditions and different enabling environments. Now that **the**



- **The post 2015 agenda must create coherence between the implemented policies and the principles of Human Rights and Democracy:** the respect of Human rights and democracy is key for the success of the developmental efforts and to reach the goals; it is thus imperative that the framework, agenda, policies and goals of the post 2015 agenda are fully coherent with the human rights framework.
 - **The post-2015 agenda must tackle governance at the global level: As the most recent financial crisis indicated,** the challenges faced in global governance must be prioritized in the post-2015 framework in order to make it more transparent, democratic and participatory. This requires revising the global macroeconomic policy framework, including those of “Bretton Woods Institution”; the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, the current global financial architecture ought to be reformed towards more fiscal regulations securing control over capital volatility and mobility. Democratization of global governance must aim at enhancing the participation of developing countries in the decision making and the promotion of the mutual accountability with efficient and effective access to information. Democratic global governance should be based **need to shift from goal-focused development** is clear, tracking quantitative trends accompanied by qualitative analysis is also essential. Furthermore, the priority issues selected for post-2015 should entail a clear statement of the problem with thorough analysis of its root causes from a multi-dimensional perspective, as well as addressing related challenges. This should be further strengthened with clear and time-lined action plans and means of implementation.
- ## 2. PROCESS TO THE POST 2015
- **The implementation of the post-2015 agenda should be much more inclusive while adopting a bottom-up approach to development:** The post-2015 process should be participatory, multilateral and inclusive of all involved in promoting development. Developing countries of the South should have a similar proactive engagement as that of industrial countries. The process should be inter-governmental, involve all stakeholders and address the demands of civil society in a sound and comprehensive manner, whereby the mechanisms should be transparent, consultative and take into account the aspirations and needs of the all citizens including those who suffer from poverty, unemployment and climate change.



3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE FRAMEWORK

- **The post 2015 agenda should focus on the need to elaborate and adopt national agendas based on the national priorities and the protection of the basic rights of the citizens:** the national agenda defining the priorities and the strategies to protect Human rights must be the result of an inclusive national dialogue including the different groups namely the business sectors , trade, labor, farmer and professional unions, civil society organizations, think tanks, research centers, academia, women and youth movements besides others
- **The post-2015 agenda should promote and enhance the efforts leading to the regional cooperation and coordination;** the regional cooperation is prerequisite to face the challenges of the integration in the global economies; it ought to establish sound mechanisms for conflict resolution and peace keeping, it should create the efficient system for the fair redistribution of wealth and natural resources, namely water, oil and gaz. Last but not least the regional coordination must establish the relevant rules and regulations for the economic cooperation
- The post 2015 goals should allow for **structural flexibility at the national level.** There is some interdependence among objectives. Thus, the new framework should consider **development objectives are a norm rather than floor or a ceiling.**
- It must also be explicitly stated that the Post-2015 development framework represents **objectives** for the world as a whole, which are not a scale to measure progress in every country because **national goals must be formulated domestically,** with the use of global norms as a point of reference.
- **Inequalities must be analyzed in any assessment of outcomes.** Within the post-2015 framework, it is necessary to monitor progress by introducing some weights that reflect the distribution among people. Despite the promising achievements of the MDGs, it is clear that the progress is uneven within and across countries on the geographic, social, economic and gender levels. **Combating chronic inequalities within and between countries** must be a priority in the agenda through the promotion of economic systems built on equitable redistribution.
- **The post-2015 agenda must capture the linkages between achieving development nationally and addressing systemic failures globally and must ensure policy coherence for development:** This necessitates the implementation of the targets included in the Goal 8 whilst taking into account their respect for internationally accepted instruments of human rights, which is the clear expression of the global partnership. Achieving the developmental goals goes beyond focusing on development aid to also look at the impacts of key policy areas such as trade, agriculture, fisheries, security on development prospects.
- **Ground the framework in the intergovernmental processes and mechanisms of monitoring and accountability of the existing international human rights instruments:** One of the vital issues that must be addressed in the post-2015 process is the question of accountability. The lack of accountability mechanisms in the MDGs framework necessitates grounding this framework within the existing international human rights

instruments such as UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, core human rights treaties including International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and human rights monitoring mechanisms including Universal Periodic Review to ensure accountability. The post 2015 development agenda should include mechanisms for monitoring the commitment and implementation of the said development agenda.

4. THEMATIC ISSUES/GOALS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE POST 2015 AGENDA

- **From Rentier toward a Developmental State:** States must be held accountable for their systems of governance. The post 2015 agenda should allow for clear targets for the move toward developmental and democratic states. This is particularly important for the Arab region where international support for previous dictatorships critically undermined development initiatives. For the post 2015 agenda, this could include revisiting existing social contracts and rethinking the roles and responsibilities of states and citizens alike.
- **An End of Occupation should be a distinct goal of the Post 2015 agenda.** The Arab region is suffering from the longest foreign occupation in modern history where a clear system of racial and religious discrimination has been put in place. This is not only a clear violation of the international law and of covenants on peace, security and human rights but it also a violation of the right to development. The post 2015 development agenda should include a clear goal with regards to the "right to self determination" as outlined in the MD and the end to occupation that includes a time bound agenda and targets for its achievement.
- **Freedom of individuals and of nations on the political and socioeconomic fronts to realize their aspirations and potential should be a clear goal of the post 2015 agenda.** Without freedom there can be no development as the Arab uprisings have shown. The realization of such freedom requires a number of measures on the political and economic front. On the political front, it includes the enjoyment of all political, economic, social and cultural rights. Policies, benchmarks and goal posts for the realization of such rights should be formulated with a time bound agenda for their achievement.

On the economic front, this implies having a supportive financial system (financial stability,

oriented to real economy, serve needs of small producers and consumers), global macro-economic coordination and policies supportive of development, non-speculative commodity market, a development-oriented trading system, sharing of and affordable access to technology and knowledge, and a fair and participatory global economic governance.

With regards to trade, the global trading system should become development-oriented. The development agenda ought to consider the country-specificities of developing countries and their right to develop as well as to follow the suit of developed countries in the path taken and tools implemented to reach the levels of development they have reached today. Furthermore, the demands of developed country for increasing trade competitiveness and further trade integration should be aligned with a periodic assessment of the implications of existing trade agreements and upcoming ones on the economic and social fronts. Finally, it is essential that trade agreements between developed and developing countries include as a benchmark the right of "policy space"⁵. Through this policy space, developing countries can create policies that support the revival of their economies in terms of producing employment and development as well as minimizing potential negative spillovers that may result from further liberalization.

- **The Post 2015 Agenda should promote participatory frameworks of governance.** As the popular unrest that has swept cities globally indicates, citizens and civil society organizations are demanding their right to participate at all levels of decision making. This entails the recongition of civil society as a key partner in identifying issues, policies and goals and in the implementation of the agendas; that is mainstreaming participatory processes at various levels of policy making including the provision of access to information and other channels. In turn this implies an overhaul of current systems of governance. Clear mechanisms for implementing such policies with bench marks for their measurement and achievement must be part of the new development framework.
- **Equity and social justice rather than the reduction of poverty should be a central goal for the Post 2015 Agenda.** Focus on poverty reduction has shifted attention from larger questions of equity and justice while economic growth has been used as an indicator of development. At the same time, numerous studies are now pointing to the fact that the richest 20 percent of individuals are benefiting from 70 percent of world income while the poorest 20 percent benefit less than 1

■ ⁵ The policy space is the ability of the national governments to protect their policy decision making processes within the framework of the multilateral and bilateral trade agreements

percent of world income. As such, the post 2015 development agenda should focus on growth with distributional mechanisms that ensure that the benefits of such growth reach all levels of society. Furthermore, patterns of inequity are not limited to income, but also include geographic, ethnic, religious and gender based biases that present a clear hindrance to development. The post-2015 agenda should present an in-depth analysis of such multidimensional inequities and include policies, goals and benchmarks for eradicating them.

- **Maintaining Social Cohesion: Many countries across the world are facing considerable social instability whether as a result of economic inequities, transitions to democracy or historic injustices.** The post 2015 agenda should include clear policy prescriptions for the maintenance of social cohesion including the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms where needed.
- **The specific conditions of LDC's many of which are suffering from considerable challenges in terms of governance, underdevelopment, acute levels of poverty and food insecurity, internal and external conflicts and widespread corruption among other issues should be addressed in a systematic manner.** This includes a commitment to institution building, facilitation of trade agreements, debt forgiveness and commitment to support peaceful dialogues and to not arm warring factions.
- **The rights of refugees and displaced should be clarified and upheld.** This includes the rights of Palestinian refugees; the largest population to be in refugee status in contemporary history as well as the rights of those displaced a result of wars and economic hardships. The post 2015 agenda should include clear benchmarks for governments in terms of the just treatment of both refugees and internally displaced populations. It should also encourage countries of origin to facilitate the return of refugees and the displaced to their areas of origin.

- **The post-2015 agenda should address gender inequality within the transformation of the development model itself:** The MDGs framework reduced gender inequalities to simplistic targets without taking into account the larger policy nexus to eradicate such discrimination. Thus, the post-2015 agenda needs to move from the mere mainstreaming of gender equality, to gender equity as central to any new development paradigm and not a mere byproduct of certain policies focused on numerical goals.

The post 2015 agenda should be an opportunity to address the deficits in knowledge acquired or a move from quantitative to qualitative measures. Current efforts to improve education are focusing on quantitative and numeric goals while the challenge is to improve knowledge including reforming the educational systems and curricula, promoting research and development skills and initiatives at different levels and in both the humanities and the sciences. It also should include concerted efforts to close the digital gap within and between countries and regions.

Clear and solid commitment to ensure sources of finance for development must be ensured within the post-2015 framework: Although the global recession and economic crisis affect both developed and developing countries, the real commitment of the developed countries to ensuring sufficient sources of finances, including 0.7% of GNI as Official Development Assistance is critical within post-2015 framework. This should be accompanied with genuine respect to commitments agreed in Accra and Bussan.

Finally, Arab civil society organizations, through ANND, will continue to coordinate and work together with ESCWA on the road to Post-2015 to ensure a genuine participatory process and engage Arab civil society effectively in its consultations.



■ Consultation 2014

“Addressing social and economic inequality:
the need for a new paradigm”

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) in partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) and the Arab Administrative Development Organization-League of Arab States (ARADO) held a Regional Forum on the 15th and 16th of June 2014 in Beirut, funded by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The regional forum, entitled “Addressing social and economic inequalities: the need for a new paradigm” gathered around 130 participants, including representatives of non-governmental organizations, labor unions, international organizations, media institutions, experts and academics to discuss the key aspects of the economic and social challenges facing development in the Arab region. The following document summarizes the discussions and recommendations advanced for the post 2015 development process and reducing socio-economic inequalities in general

Introduction

1. The Arab region witnessed since 2011 unprecedented upheavals movement aiming at dismantling authoritarian regimes and addressing economic and social inequalities. The reality today is far removed from the initial demands of dignity, freedom and social justice. Fact is, countries in the region still suffer from various impediments on freedom of expression, the military’s stranglehold, elections held amidst turmoil and security risks, propagation of armed gangs and the rise of radical religious movements. This affects nation-building and democratic development. For the participants, the essence of social contracts between States and their people is the cornerstone for development. This entails their reconsideration and the incorporation of community and policy dialogues involving various social actors. **The participants stressed on the need to involve Civil Society as a full-fledged development partner and to ensure an enabling environment which enhances its participation in dialogue and policy-making spheres.**

2. In Parallel to the Arab uprisings, the global debate on the Post-2015 and SDG processes is moving forward. The launch of the proposed set of goals and related indicators by September 2014 is a milestone, and will pave the way for the final adoption of the new post-2015 development agenda in September 2015. In this context, the participants corroborated the outcomes of the regional consultation meeting on post-2015 organized on March 2013¹ and considered that a reliable Post-2015 development agenda is not only about setting developmental goals and quantitative

indicators; rather, the new development agenda must integrate transformative changes to global governance systems and to national policy choices in order to achieve development and to overcome the challenges of inequality, exclusion and vulnerability. This necessitates a shift towards a model centered on enhancing national productive capacities which require an enabling trade and investment architecture, a revision of the redistribution policies and the adoption of social policies that puts peoples’ economic and social rights at the forefront. In addition, they considered that the three proposed development pillars - the economy, the environment and social concerns - are not sufficient. What is needed is an expansion of the vision to include improved national governance as well as the cultural and religious aspects so that we can build an integrated development paradigm.

3. On the international level, the democratization of global governance is a must, with the aim of enhancing the participation of developing countries in decision-making processes and the promotion of mutual accountability with efficient and effective access to information. Changes should be introduced to the global financial architecture with a view to reverse the expansion of financial economy at the expense of the real economy and address financial volatility, debt crisis and economic recessions. Structural reforms are also needed in the trading system, in order to move from the principle of the open-market to the concept of Strategic Integration, which maintains a necessary margin for countries at the level of policy-making (related to trade), allowing them to support productive sectors, to create required jobs and to advance national development priorities.

4. On the regional level, Arab countries need to seek a model focused on enhancing national productive and industrial capacities and collective regional production chains that would carry a positive developmental impact over the region’s geography and empower labor across it. This would in turn build the basis for a regional integration and development that is fundamental to establishing sustained expansion of markets across region and hence improves competitiveness at the global market level.

5. On the national level, the new model should strengthen the developmental role of the state in order to support the process of deep transformation in the economic structures. The latter have as a core objective supporting productive sectors, industry, building technological capacity, supporting an integrated and parallel shift in the social national structures aiming at ensuring social justice for all through fair redistribution of wealth, progressive taxation and provision of basic services. Yet, though ensuring social justice is central to the new development model, it should be

¹ Declaration of Civil Society Organizations from the Arab Region on the Post 2015 framework, Regional Consultation on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, (Beirut, 14 March 2013) <http://www.annd.org/english/data/folders/117.pdf>

² ESCWA defines social justice as a normative concept centered on the principles of, equality, equity, rights and participation. It builds on the two key principles: equal basic rights and equality of opportunity that must be of the greatest benefit to the least advantaged in society. Read more at http://www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/E_ESCWA_SDD_13_TP-12_E.pdf

comprehensive and centered on principles of, equality, equity, rights and participation². The latter requires implementing transparent, inclusive and participatory mechanisms and ensuring citizen engagement models in restructuring governance and redesigning policies. This would allow achieving better distributive outcomes and strengthen democracy.³

6. This document outlines main issues and priorities with regard to the post 2015 development agenda that were raised during the workshop.

The Trade and Investment frameworks in the new development paradigm:

*7. A crucial component of the new development model should be a reformed trading system and a shift from the decade-old conundrum “**Liberalization for the sake of Liberalization**” to a “**Strategic Integration Concept**”. Inclusive, sustainable and redistributive growth as well as the enhancement of productive capacities would be at its center.*

8. Investment and Trade trends promoted so far have revolved around economic growth that only benefits investors. In addition, bilateral and multilateral agreements signed by Arab countries are skewed unfairly. They enforce a wide array of protections of investors at the expense of citizens’ entitled social and economic rights and national economic priorities. The agreements have been advanced and advocated for by the World Trade Organization (WTO). By way of policy advice and binding recommendations, it aimed at strengthening its promoted model namely, facilitating trade and overprotecting investors. Unfortunately, the current discussions on the post-2015 agenda remain insufficient to tackle these challenges, pointing at the WTO as the most effective tool for increasing the now-absent developmental impact of Trade. No mention was made of the potential impacts of a complete liberalization of domestic markets via the removal of the various trade barriers. However, on a global level, during discussions on alternatives for “just and comprehensive growth” no concrete propositions were

put forward.

9. On the regional level, the Investment Agreements between Arab Countries signed originally to promote Arab trade integration are being modified which will lead to a loss of its main objective i.e. Arab integration; by reducing protections and thus reducing the space available for Arab countries to create a real business pattern.

10. Trade partners are still contributing to further trade liberalization while neglecting real development approaches. For instance, under the Deauville partnership umbrella, the EU aims at signing Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs), with four Arab countries- Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan- which will go further in removing tariffs and furthering the liberalization of trade in agricultural and manufactured goods, services and investment sectors. Such agreements will set their economies firmly on a path towards an export-led growth model. Likewise, the IMF’s loans and advice to Arab countries are always colored by the goal of improving “the business environment” and increasing market flexibilities based on Washington consensus, i.e. phasing out subsidies, dismantling tariffs, broadening the value-added taxes, resuming privatization, and increasing public-private partnerships as means for increasing infrastructure investments. Such recommendations simply result in re-enforcing the economic choices promoted with previous regimes, while neglecting the proven inadequacy of such choices in addressing development challenges that Arab countries have been facing.

This requires a deep reconsideration of the development model to enhance development-oriented trade and investment policies, through⁴:

- **Protecting development policy space of developing countries involved in trade liberalization agreements.** This cannot be achieved through the inclusion of a sustainable development chapter or clauses but rather necessitates ensuring the integration of human rights and development considerations in decision-making in policy formulation, design, and implementation. In addition, these agreements must be designed in full partnership between the negotiating parties and not based on a template model that one party develops and the other signs on. The ability to regulate and re-regulate in various areas and sectors for the legitimate public interest purposes are fundamental to any prospective development process, and should not be restrained by investment and trade rules.
- **A radical shift in the approach to trade and investment policies to get out of the current trade model, which aims at liberalizing trade**

³ http://www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/E_ESCWA_SDD_13_TP-12_E.pdf

⁴ <http://ecdpm.org/great-insights/trade-and-human-rights/democratic-transitions-eu-deep-comprehensive-ftas-mena-countries-possible-backlash/>

to the concept of strategic integration, which aims at building the production capacities and increasing the added value of national production at the regional level.

- **Paying attention to the dangers of public-private partnerships in light of the weakness of public institutions in the Arab countries, which leads to an imbalance in these partnerships for the benefit of the private sector and threatens citizens' right to access public services due to the rising prices and doubts around its quality. Also, imbalanced PPPs put a huge financial load on public budgets.**
- **Organize the role of the private sector in the development process and adopt an international mandatory mechanism of human rights based on corporate social responsibility which ensures full compliance to Extra Territorial Obligations as described in the Maastricht Principles.** The former would necessitate business sector to regularly and publicly report on its investments' environmental and human rights impact, and identify steps to mitigate the risks.

More justice in redistribution policies: Taxation policies:

11. The new developmental model must adopt policies for fair redistribution of wealth and resources through progressive taxation and providing all the necessary public services with a good quality and link it to fair wage policies which contribute to strengthening the participation of all social groups in the national economic cycle.

12. Taxes are crucial means for domestic resource mobilization and taxation is central to civility and a democratic understanding of citizenship through an enhanced accountability. Taxation enables the state to provide quality basic services and thus to ensure full enjoyment of economic and social rights by its citizens. Accordingly, progressive taxation occupies a central place in reducing inequalities and redistributing wealth equitably. Yet, several domestic and global challenges hinders the efficiency of tax, including

“weak tax collection, rampant tax evasion, ...regressive tax incentives as tax exemptions, deficiencies in the enforcement of tax obligations, insufficient application of progressive income and capital taxes and low tax morale”.⁵

13. There are similarities in the challenges to the tax systems in the countries of the Arab world, with the low proportion of tax revenues being a problem faced by the Arab economy. The proportion of tax revenues from the GDP ranges between 10% and 17%, which is low, and shared with most developing countries, compared to tax collection in advanced states, reaching up to 38% of the GDP. Tax systems in the Arab world are based on taxation to improve state spending or reduce the deficit and are not a result of economic and social foundations with a productive developmental outlook.

In this context, the new development model should include an improved taxation system with tax equity at its center and as a core component to address inequalities. This should include:

- **Increasing fiscal transparency at the national level and ensuring access to information on tax collection and how revenue is spent. This should be further enhanced by legislative frameworks to ensure access to information and raising citizen awareness and understanding on fiscal transparency.**
- **Implementing progressive tax in order to address inequalities while generating revenue in an equitable way, taking a larger percentage from the income of high-income earners than from low-income individuals, the mobilized resources should be allocated to benefit the most disadvantaged in society. Promote the principle of tax equity and balance between taxes on individuals in the form of taxes on income and taxes on purchases on the one hand and taxes on companies and huge investments on the other hand.**
- **Abolishing discretionary tax incentives and tax havens.** Illicit financial flows, about 80% of which stem from cross-border corporate tax evasion and capital flight through tax avoidance⁶ This global hindrance to domestic resource mobilization should be curbed together through regular reporting of large companies on tax payments, along with their impacts on sustainable development and human rights.

⁵ <http://www.cesr.org/downloads/fiscal.revolution.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.cesr.org/downloads/fiscal.revolution.pdf>

Social protection policies:

14. *The new development model must be based on a new social contract with the recognition of social protection as a human right and as central to addressing inequalities and social injustice. Social protection policies must be at the heart of the development process and therefore it is necessary to ensure legislative and financial frameworks.*

15. States are legally obliged to establish social protection systems. This legal obligation derives from the right to social security which is enshrined in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Despite the binding nature of social protection, the approach adopted so far in the Arab region is not a legal one; it rather adopts a fragmented and targeted approach. This approach restricts social protection policies to social safety nets and offers limited solutions which do not reduce poverty in a sustainable way. In the Arab Region, social protection schemes are fragmented, underdeveloped and insufficiently-funded. Moreover, these schemes only target those who can finance their subscriptions without presenting solutions for large social strata including: people dependent on the informal economy, unemployed, elderly, children or people with disabilities. More importantly, the government's inability to compel the private sector to follow local laws regarding minimum wage or social schemes presents a common deficiency in social policies in the Arab region. Providing social protection is an indicator of the democratization of a society, since a society which enjoys social security is certainly more able to make choices and to engage in democratic processes.

Therefore the new development model must foster a new social contract that includes:

- *On the international level, the development of comprehensive social security systems is a global commitment. The international community is requested to provide adequate financial assistance and technical support to developing countries to build social protection systems or to expand the coverage of existing social security mechanisms and support policy dialogue in this area.*
- *Invite the international community to insist on human rights based social protection floors' initiative and include within social protection policies. There is a need to adopt this initiative as a basis for other developmental processes and to not abandon it through fragmented approaches to social protection.*

- *On the national level, a structural change in the approach is needed. There is a need to shift from the concepts of social safety nets, targeting programs and cash transfers in order to consider social protection schemes in a broad development strategy aimed at achieving universal coverage, social justice and the realization of human rights. There is a need to unify social protection schemes and ensure equality of services and coverage to the entire population. This change must occur while keeping in mind that the social protection system is not a rentier system, it is a duty and an obligation that the state should provide to its citizens protection and dignity at different stages of their lives.*
- *There is also a need to revisit the role of the state in relation to other partners in order to lead a social dialogue among various economic and social components including representatives of the business sector, civil society constituencies, trade unions, women movements, youth, cultural, and people with disabilities.*
- *Increase social spending as a proportion of total government spending. Reform plans must be linked to the adoption and implementation of comprehensive and integrated social policy. Ensuring adequate financing for social protection policies should be based on sustainable economic choices, effective tax policies, enhanced governance and restructuring the subsidy system.*
- *Adopt social policies that eradicate discrimination against women, guarantee their integration in the society and abolish the de jure and defacto gaps between men and women.*

Labor policies and comprehensive social development

The main pillar of any radical change in the development model and the basic indicator of the efficacy of economic and social choices remains the extent of their ability to create decent and sustainable jobs. In fact, the social economic model adopted so far in the Arab countries has led to high rates of unemployment, to the migration of young people and to the expansion of fragile and unregulated employment sectors.

Therefore the new development model must establish labor policies based on the following principles:

- Review the development model in order to enhance productivity options and develop manufacturing and agriculture sectors to generate decent and sustainable jobs.
- Apply decent work standards to which it adhered and that include securing the right to work, appropriate labor conditions terms and allowances, the protection of the right to form unions in addition to enabling unions to participating effectively in the formulation of public policy and in multilateral social dialogue.
- Secure decent working conditions for migrant workers to and/ from the Arab countries.

Cross-cutting issues:

The new development model should foster gender equity, peace and the right to self-determination.

While the Post-2015 Development Agenda is underway, rights organizations and feminist movements are pushing for a development framework based on human rights, gender equality and economic justice. Concerning the Arab region, women have always been at the heart of citizens' movements and activities; they have played key and active roles in recent revolutions and uprisings that advanced ambitions and hopes about establishing new social contracts and national development projects. Arab women sustain their struggle for participatory national economic and social public policies based on the principles of sovereignty, equality and justice and the right to development.

Nevertheless, although all Arab States have signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), gender-based disparities are common in the region on political, cultural, social and economic levels. Therefore, it is decisive to include women's rights and gender equality in the post 2015 process through:

- ***Recognizing women's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, undertaking special measures to promote these rights and combating all kinds of discrimination and violence perpetuated against them.***
- ***Adopting a systematic approach to the principle of gender equality in all aspects of the development agenda, while recognizing women as key leaders and active elements in social and economic transition, not only beneficiaries.***

Conflicts have long been a reality of the Arab region, as long as the quest for peace and security. The former resulted in limitations on states capacities to progressively fulfill the obligations in the field of economic and social rights. Moreover, they have lead to the focus on narrow security agendas and rehabilitation related to immediate needs resulting from conflicts instead of building comprehensive human security approaches that integrate long-term development policies. Expenditure on militarization (as a percentage of GDP) is amongst the highest in the world, compared to low resource allocation to ensuring social and economic development. Accordingly, the vast discrepancy in resource allocation will undermine the government's ability to effectively realize these rights. The lack of peace and security is also linked to foreign occupation. The continued Israeli occupation of Palestine and its expansionist policies is not only a clear violation of international law but also a violation of the right to development resulting in devastating impact on peace, stability and development in Palestine and the surrounding countries.

- ***While the current discourse on post-2015 process refers to peaceful societies, it is evident that a clear reference to the right to self-determination is a must, as development cannot take place without freedom of individuals and of nations.***



■ Consultation 2015

Alternative Development strategies for Post-2015:
Exit from the Current Policy Approach

I. Introduction

The international community adopted the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the beginning of the new century and set the deadline for their achievement by year 2015. The MDGs became the key reference for the international development agenda, setting specific, agreed upon, and measurable objectives focusing on the reduction of poverty and hunger, ensuring universal education, promoting gender equality, reducing child and maternal mortality, and so on.

The goals were directed to developing countries in particular, with only one goal (Goal VIII) related to the principle of joint international cooperation to achieve the remaining seven goals. It focused on a global partnership for development, aimed at promoting a fair and regulated trade and financial system, to meet the needs of least developed countries and address the question of debt in developing countries.

With the onset of the new millennium, however, the global economy was hit by several acute and multidimensional crises. Poverty, inequality, and hunger continued to spread. Risks and insecurity levels grew on a global scale, added to concerns regarding the future supply of basic goods like water and energy, the threat of climate change, demographic pressures resulting from growing populations, especially in the old age, and the rapid fluctuations in the balances of power in the global economy. On the global level, these challenges were closely tied to the promotion of the free economy and integrated markets, along with weak global governance and the absence of fair distribution mechanisms in the global public interest. This brought about more crises, which international development tracks failed to address or even predict.

The recent global financial crisis (2008-2009), with its tremendous repercussions on the global economy, revealed the systemic deficiencies at the heart of the international economic and social policies and the absence of any form of social justice. The financial crisis came in parallel with various other crises, including the soaring and volatile global prices of food and energy, in addition to persisting challenges related to climate change.

II. Where Did the MDGs Fail?

The establishment of an MDGs agenda contributed to several achievements and some progress, especially in terms of allocating resources to combat poverty and foster – albeit timidly – the spirit of global partnership involving all stakeholders. However, the MDGs did not attain the results expected by 2015, which raised questions regarding whether the current model could achieve sustainable development, including for future generations.

The MDGs were drafted based on very limited consultations and through a vague process. They resulted from discussions prioritizing expert technical opinion, in the almost complete absence of social participation towards a rights-based development agenda and with the failure to adopt social justice as a priority objective. The development agenda was thus simplified and established with a clear focus on eradicating various forms of extreme poverty. This was at the expense of other equally important development goals, such as fighting inequality and discrimination, participation and social justice, political freedoms, and so on. The goals were limited to addressing the symptoms, without going into the actual causes.

The absence of tools and mechanisms to achieve the desired objectives was another obstacle in the framework of the MDGs. It contributed to focusing policy efforts on improving social services provision (education, health, etc.), at the expense of other developmental priorities, such as diversifying production, building productive capacities, and creating decent work opportunities. This is in addition to its impact on the distributive effects of macroeconomic policies, the fair and sustainable management of natural resources, and to building a balanced global governance.

Furthermore, despite being common global goals under the supervision of the international community, in reality, the MDGs became a set of «one-size-fits-all» objectives. Each country was expected to pursue the same global goals, regardless of national developmental needs or the initial conditions in each country. Thus, the goals seemed to be biased towards the poorest countries.

On the other hand, progress on Goal 8 to develop a global partnership for development remained extremely limited, due to the lack of specific commitments for developed countries in the MDGs agenda. More precisely, targets for the promotion of the global partnership were not carefully set, which led to a weak accountability process for international aid. Many international commitments remained ink on paper.

III. Arab Region: Challenges and Prospects

The Arab Region has fallen into a spiral of conflicts directly affecting the transformations it witnesses, as traditional and conservative forces cling to their interests in the face of the great desire of the people to achieve progress, justice, and solidly-grounded citizenship and democracy. The spreading violence turned into armed conflicts in several countries and into an obstacle to achieving the tasks of the Arab Spring, which erupted in protest of the lack of public and private freedoms, social justice, and human dignity, and against rampant corruption.

A range of global challenges – economic, social, and political – continue to face the Arab Region. In particular, these challenges are found in the persistent geographic, factional, and social disparities, in the breakdown of food security and worsening environmental problems, in the spread of violence and conflict, in the rampant corruption and growing crony capitalism, and in the weakness of the state and the absence of the rule of law, as a result of decades of «structural adjustment» policies and austerity measures. This is added to many challenges related to unemployment, poverty, social marginalization, growing extremism and terrorist movements, worsening immigration, aging, and lack of freedoms, not to mention the Israeli occupation of Palestine and entailed economic, security, and social barriers in the region.

Countries in the region have failed to confront these challenges, owing to the nature of the dominant global neoliberal model and the entailed continuous restructuring of the global economic and social order. Another factor on the economic, social, and political levels is the rentier nature of the state in the region. On one hand, it is still based on unproductive economies, with the absence of wealth redistribution mechanisms and social protection systems. On the other hand, this contributes to disabling freedoms and the domestication and control of civil society and trade union organizations, not to mention the rampant financial and administrative corruption in government institutions in the absence of accountability mechanisms and the lack of participation by stakeholders in implementation.

A comprehensive vision for the future of the region and the world as a whole is needed in this context. It should be founded on a range of economic, social, humanitarian, and environmental principles within an integrated and homogeneous framework, based on the principles of human rights and linking between environmental sustainability, integrated economic

development, human security, and integrated social development. As a whole, it should aspire to achieve a better future for all. Standing on the principles of social justice, it should be based on equality, sustainability, equity, participation, and human rights. This also entails setting the foundations of a democratic civil developmental state, built on a new social contract between citizens and the state, based on the principles of human rights, participation, citizenship, transparency, and accountability.

IV. Alternative Strategies and Proposed Frameworks for the Post-2015 Agenda

- The Post-2015 Agenda should be based on a new development framework, incorporating more progressive policies in line with international principles of human rights, to meet the global challenges to development, likely to result from existing policies and strategies, and to safeguard the economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights of citizens all over the world.
- The search for a more stable and fairer model should be based on the critical assessment of past development experiences and must determine the underlying causes of the growing phenomena being faced. It should conclude with identifying new measures to respond to the new challenges resulting from the interconnected crises suffered by our world since the beginning of the millennium.
- Any future vision of development in the post-2015 framework clearly requires a global responsibility to affect change in developed and developing countries alike, which includes altering global consumption and production patterns, as well as national and international regulatory frameworks. It should contribute to determining more coherent, equitable and sustainable economic, social, and environmental policy responses, in addition to promoting more representative structures of global governance.
- The debate must shift from the mere focus on identifying new post-2015 goals and objectives into analyzing the key issues and means of

implementation. In this context, there should be a shift from thinking about new sets of numerical targets, into designing goals and objectives that could deal with the various critical conditions and the diverse enabling environments.

- A successful post-2015 development strategy is not limited to adequate policy design. It requires wide social support as a common social project for change and progress. In all successful cases, the state retained a key and active role in directing and managing the process of change, correcting market deficiencies, improving overall dynamic efficiencies, and protecting human rights. In this regard, the Post-2015 Development Framework should recognize the vital and active role of the state, side by side with other development actors to respond to the multiple crises shaking the global economy. In turn, this requires maintaining general cohesion so as to avoid dispensing with one advantage for the sake another and where tools and policies adopted to solve one crisis do not lead to aggravating the impact of other crises.
- The Post-2015 Development Framework should incorporate effective strategies combining short-term achievements with the long-term sustainability of development, through the adoption of measures and policies aimed to confront cyclical imbalances, create sustainable foundations for growth and development, reduce distributional tensions, and alleviate environmental costs.
- The Post-2015 Development Framework should incorporate a clear strategy to improve well-being in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner. A cornerstone of this strategy is to press towards effective manufacturing policies, along with environmental and energy regulations, for low-carbon growth. The majority of successful development experiences had aimed to diversify production and move away from rentierism. The strategies of these economic transformations were built on supporting economic diversification, through macroeconomic policies and active manufacturing. This included setting competitive exchange rates and tax and credit measures to stimulate investment, particularly in infant industries, as well as measures to support research and development and to attract foreign direct investment aimed at bolstering links to local production.
- The Post-2015 Development Framework should include a clear strategy for structural flexibility in developing economies, including the level of economic openness and the degree of integration in global markets through trade, investment, and financial liberalization. The latter must be based on the size of the country and its productive specialization. In turn, this requires an active production policy aimed to enhance national capacities, create dynamic competitive advantages, and promote sustained progress in production

and export supplies. Moreover, developing countries should be able to implement regulatory mechanisms for their own capital accounts, to avoid importing any disruptions or difficulties in the management of the macroeconomy, in addition to the fight against illicit flows.

- The Post-2015 Development Framework should include an effective and fair redistribution strategy, encompassing a progressive tax system, in order to mitigate the increasing gap between poor and rich and secure the necessary revenue from individuals and companies alike, to enable the state to provide public services to citizens. In this regard, it is imperative to reach an agreement on international mechanisms to limit the phenomenon of tax havens, which deprive countries of the South of vast resources from potential taxes. Furthermore, the strategy should include employment policies aimed at creating decent jobs and addressing the spread of the informal sector.
- The Post-2015 Development Framework should include a strategy based on a new global partnership for development, allowing all states and active development actors – including civil society organizations, academia, governments, regional and international institutions, the private sector, the media, and so on – to address global and national challenges. In turn, this requires the design of collaborative and coherent local and global approaches.

V. Arab Demands: Issues and Objectives to for the Post-2015 Agenda

In addition to the above, CSOs in the Arab Region adopted the Arab recommendations for the sustainable development goals (SDGs) reached at the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Jordan on 2-4 April 2014 and organized by ESCWA, the Arab League, UNEP, and UN DESA, in collaboration with the Jordanian Ministries of Planning and International Cooperation and of the Environment.

The proposed Arab goals seem to live up to the aspirations of Arab peoples in terms of addressing challenges and meeting developmental needs in the region. However, since drafting the goals in the context



of the post-2015 development agenda is a political process, the elaboration of such goals will be realized through Arab negotiators in the UN summit to adopt the development agenda on 25-27 September 2015.

On the other hand, in addition to the declared goals, CSOs in the Arab regions call to integrate the funding mechanisms related to the Financing for Development (FfD) track, led by the UN, within the financial mechanisms of the post-2015 development agenda. Despite being independent, both tracks raise issues, which are organically integrated; any change to the developmental model would be linked to the outcomes of both tracks. Negotiators at the next leg of the FfD track (Addis Ababa on July 13 to 16, 2015) have already prepared a paper, which includes the basic discussion points and calls for the mobilization of developing countries' national resources to set financing for development in motion.

In this context, and based on the spirit of the Arab proposal for the SDGs, CSOs in the Arab region call for the adoption of the following issues in the post-2015 agenda:

- Considering the principle of «common but differentiated responsibilities», adopted by the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, to be a fundamental principle in strengthening the global partnership for development. It places the various development partners opposite their responsibilities to confront the challenges currently faced by humanity. Rich countries evading their responsibilities in supporting development efforts in developing countries is an underlying reason for the failure to achieve the goals.
- Reference should be made to the need to formulate a new social contract between citizens and the state, based on the principles of human rights, participation, citizenship, accountability, transparency, and social justice. The social contract should fall within an integrated and homogeneous framework, based on the principles of human rights and linking between environmental sustainability, integrated economic development, human security, and integrated social development. This also entails setting the foundations of democratic, civil developmental states, which put economic, social, cultural, and environmental development at the forefront of their priorities. In turn, states should enact legislations, which is in line with the prospective goals of the post-2015 agenda framework.
- All states should ratify and implement all international conventions, including those related to combating corruption, as well as comply with the requirement to adopt a legislative framework, which recognizes the right to access to information and the protection of witnesses and informants, in addition to strengthening accountability and oversight mechanisms.
- Freedom of individuals and nations should extend to the political, social, and economic levels. As the Arab uprisings have shown, development will not be achieved without freedom. However, the achievement of freedom requires a number of measures on the political and economic levels. On the political front, it must include the enjoyment of all political, economic, social, and cultural rights, and the adoption of policies, standards, and targets for the realization of these rights. On the economic front, this means finding a supportive financial system (financial stability and orientation to the real economy, and serving small-scale producer and consumer needs). This is in addition

- to coordination at the global macroeconomic level, identifying markets for non-speculative goods, and the exchange and affordable access to technology and knowledge. Moreover, a new development-oriented trading and investment system should be established to integrate the right to «policy space» in trade and investment agreements between countries, which would enable developing countries to develop policies that support economic recovery, in terms of enhancing productive capacities, the creation of decent employment opportunities, and contributing to the realization of economic and social rights.
- Equity and social justice should be included explicitly. Social Justice – based on the principles of participation, equity, equality and human rights – entails combating all forms of poverty that are not measured by traditional poverty lines, such as access to quality education and healthcare services, unemployment, and inequality. Reports are indicating a huge increase in the rates of disparity between people; the world has reached a stage where the richest 1% of the world's population controls more than 85% of its resources. On the other hand, patterns of inequality are not limited to income; they include geographic, ethnic, religious, and gender-based prejudices, which are a clear obstacle to development. Therefore, the post-2015 agenda must provide an in-depth analysis of these multi-dimensional discrepancies, while setting goals and standards to eliminate them. It should also reconsider the poverty line set at less than \$1.25 a day, according to which poverty levels in the Arab region are 4%, although they are actually much higher. Finally, the approach that considers social protection an additional cost and a burden on the state must be abandoned. It should be replaced with a rights-based approach, through the expansion of social protection floors to include all kinds of citizens, including those working in the informal sector.
- The rights of refugees and displaced persons must be elaborated and clarified. This includes the rights of Palestinian refugees, the largest population of refugees in contemporary history, as well as the rights of displaced persons and refugees as a result of wars and economic hardship. The post-2015 agenda must include clear standards for governments, in terms of fair treatment for both refugees and internally displaced persons. Countries of origin should also be encouraged to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons to their places of origin.
- Addressing gender inequality should be included in the context of changing the above developmental model. The post-2015 agenda should shift from merely mainstreaming gender equality, towards gender equity, which should be the focus of any new development model, as part of its foundations and a measure of its success, and not merely a secondary outcome of particular policies.
- Participatory governance frameworks must be enhanced. The post-2015 development agenda should refer to the rights of various stakeholders to participate at all levels of decision-making. This requires the recognition of civil society as well as other development actors as key partners in identifying issues, policies, and objectives and the implementation of programs of action. This entails allowing access to information and other channels. The post-2015 agenda must also point to the importance of social dialogue, between the various components of society, especially workers, employers, and the state.
- Social cohesion must be maintained. The post-2015 agenda should allow for clear political prescriptions to maintain social cohesion, including strengthening the independence of the judiciary and its role in fiscal, administrative, and constitutional oversight, in addition to the enactment of transitional justice mechanisms where needed.
- The funding mechanisms of the UN-led FfD track must be incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda. The issues proposed by the FfD track are organically linked to those in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, which must address questions related to reforming national tax systems, changing consumption and production patterns, strengthening the role of the state, reviewing the role of international institutions (such as IMF and OECD) in managing international financial affairs, and following-up on negotiations to restructure sovereign debt. These measures entail curbing tax evasion and exemption under the guise of promoting investment. CSOs also call for international cooperation on tax issues to implement taxes on capital flow and produce a legally binding agreement under UN auspices to ensure a solid framework for action. The FfD track must make up an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda. The international dialogue on global partnership for development, in particular, should not be neglected like the case in the framework of financing for development negotiations, merely satisfied with some structural reforms, which had failed to provide the anticipated social equality and development.
- Environmental questions should be included in all the goals as well as being a standalone goal and the standards and mechanisms for developing coherent environmental objectives must be identified.
- The inclusion of «ending the occupation» as a clear and explicit objective and setting a specific time period for ending the occupation. The Arab region suffers from the longest foreign occupation (Israel) in modern history, which imposes a system of clear racial and religious discrimination. This is not only in violation of international laws and conventions on peace, security, and human rights, but also contravenes with the right to development.

■ Consultation 2016

Regional Workshop for Civil Society Organizations
in the Arab Countries: Regional Approaches for the
Implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development
Beirut June 23-24, 2016



The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and Oxfam in the Middle East and North Africa organized a workshop for civil society organizations in the Arab countries entitled “Regional Approaches for the Implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in Beirut on June 23 and 24, 2016, which was funded by the Ford Foundation.

The workshop brought together 60 representatives of civil society organizations, international organizations, trade unions, and experts. The participants agreed on this outcome document which reflects the main discussions and key interventions.

I. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region

On September 25, 2015, world leaders approved a new global development agenda, succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and entitled “Transforming Our World: 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.” It consists of 4 interrelated and indivisible parts, starting with the preamble and the declaration, which contain the Agenda’s terms of reference, namely promoting equality, peace and human rights, eradicating poverty, preserving the planet and revitalizing partnership.

The Agenda includes 17 goals and 169 targets, as well as a part on the means of implementation and another for follow-up and review. 193 countries endorsed the Agenda, including the Arab countries.

The 2030 Agenda is the result of a wide scope of discussions with the participation of the civil society, the private sector and governments. It provides a comprehensive response to the development challenges at the Arab, international, and national levels, in crucial fields such as people, planet Earth, prosperity, peace and partnership. The 2030 Agenda includes numerous additions to the MDGs, and sheds light on important issues of priority to the Arab countries. It should be noted that the 2030 Agenda is indivisible since its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are global in nature, take into account the different situations, capacities and levels of national development, and respect national policies and priorities. The goals are not independent of one another, and should be implemented in an integrated manner.

The SDGs rely on the results achieved by the MDGs and aim to move forward to eradicate poverty in all its forms. The new goals are considered unique in that they call on all countries, rich, poor and middle-income to take the necessary procedures to promote prosperity and protect the planet at the same time. These goals recognize that eradication of poverty must go hand in hand with strategies that achieve sustainable economic growth and address a range of social needs, including education, health,

social protection and employment opportunities, as well as climate change and environment protection at the same time¹.

Perhaps the most notable additions are stressing on moving from an approach aimed at the eradication of extreme poverty to a new approach aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms, reducing inequality within and among countries (Goal 10), as well as linking between development and peace by identifying a goal that promotes building peaceful societies where no one is marginalized, providing access to justice for all, and building efficient, accountable and inclusive societies (Goal 16).

A goal for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (Goal 5) was also identified, as well as a goal ensuring the protection of workers’ rights and providing a safe work environment, including foreign workers.

Other goals were also added, aiming at meeting sustainable and efficient natural resources management conditions, reducing waste production from food commodities’ trading and consumption, and reducing solid waste production through proactive measures, reduction, recycling and reuse.

Despite the expansion of its goals, the 2030 Agenda remains incomplete due to the lack of the political and cultural dimensions, as it did not give the political institutional dimension of development, which is to maintain peace, security and democratic governance, the importance it deserves. The 2030 Agenda almost entirely overlooked the cultural-moral dimension of development.

1. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/12/SDG.Overview.pdf>

II. Structural challenges that hinder achieving the implementation of the development goals

Despite the work progress at the international level, the 2030 Agenda faces a significant number of challenges relating to the plan itself or to the extent of the states' ability to implement it [the Agenda], including the Arab countries, which are dealing with several challenges. These countries are witnessing instability, conflicts, high immigration and displacement rates, demographic movements, lack of social equality, growing cases of poverty and unemployment, economic, environmental, and financial crises, as well as a worsening public debt, and challenges related to administration and governance, which constitute real constraints to the desired sustainable development. Thus, it is necessary to tackle these challenges in order to improve the chances of success.

- **The Development Model:** One of the main challenges hindering the achievement of the MDGs included transforming these goals into an agenda separated from the discussion of the requirements of the necessary structural transformation in order to achieve a comprehensive development.

No action was taken towards reforming the global financial and commercial systems, which constitute a challenge that hampers development efforts in developing countries, including Arab countries. Goals and targets were used as benchmarks to assess progress at the national level away from the international policies' repercussions on national and local development. The Arab countries'

Development Model — based on economic growth and foreign investment regardless of its sources and objectives and away from the foundations of a fair and comprehensive development — which was followed during the period of implementation of the Millennium Development Agenda is one of the structural challenges that hampered the development process in the region.

This is in addition to the neopatrimonialism [prevailing] in the regional states, which are still rentier states at the economic, social and political levels. These states depend on non-productive economies which lack mechanisms for redistribution of wealth and social protection. This economic trend, which has been followed for decades, has proven its inability to achieve fair and sustainable development. Even if some

development indicators registered a slight improvement, problems arising from the lack of an adequate response to the desire of citizens to live in dignity² have piled up. Furthermore, the exclusion of many segments of the society from the development process, and the multiple exclusion and

marginalization of women, youth, and disabled persons constitutes a violation of human rights and an impediment to the development process in the region with a negative impact affecting the society as a whole. It is clear that the development approach followed in the national plans to achieve the 2030 Agenda as set by some of the Arab countries did not adequately review this model.

- **Tax Regulations:** Achieving equality at the national level requires reexamining the state's regulatory role, which allows it to protect and fulfil the citizens' rights, and drawing policies that focus

on equitable redistribution through taxation and the provision of services. However, this approach has not been followed in most Arab countries³, since the indicators used to measure the progress in terms of the sustainable development goals showed the continuation of the development model that gives a

higher role for the private sector and depends on it to finance development without increasing taxes on companies to broaden the tax base. On the contrary, this development model tends to impose taxes on consumers through the VAT. Moreover, [tax] collection and distribution [of wealth] through taxes and services are not fair and are marred by a fundamental flaw as they burden the citizens and employees and favour big companies and investors. It is well known that the Arab countries in general have poor tax regulations and the concept of citizen's rights associated with tax is almost inexistent.

- **Public Debt:** Indebtedness is a long-standing and radical problem and approaches by financial institutions are incomplete. It is worth mentioning that even European countries, which were considered relatively rational borrowers, are hit by a debt crisis, hence the need for radical solutions. The Arab countries depend heavily on external financing and debt, and public debt service takes up a high proportion of the State's budget, which adversely affects social spending and significantly hinders the achievement of the SDGs. It should be noted that the public debt problem does not

² National Report, Egypt, Social Watch Report 2016: Lack of strategy in the 2030 strategy, prepared by the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) and the New Woman Foundation available at: <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/17218>

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receive the attention it deserves, and most countries practice the “ignore and stall policy”, as if public debt was a normal matter or will disappear either automatically or through political deals with lenders.

• **Global Partnership for Development:** the Agenda also includes a new concept for “Global Partnership for [Sustainable] Development” based on “the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities” which was adopted at the Earth Summit on Sustainable Development. However, the 2030 Agenda changed this concept of “partnership” into “partnerships” among a group of key players and stakeholders in the development process without adequately and clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and mechanisms. This entails the risk of undermined responsibilities and weakened possibilities of accountability, especially in light of the lack of accountability mechanisms for all parties. Moreover, the global influential powers having the final say on the international economic and governance system seek to undermine this principle, which they were forced to adopt in the environmental area. These powers are fighting the idea of mainstreaming this principle on other areas such as economic, social, and even political development, especially in terms of wars and conflicts with an international dimension.

III. Challenges related to mechanisms of public policy-making and development planning processes in the Arab region:

Policy-making and development planning processes in the Arab region are characterized by the lack of dialogue between stakeholders (such as civil society organizations, the private sector, trade unions, and the media). This significantly affects the quality of the adopted policies and their efficient implementation. Although the 2030 Agenda stresses the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable development, yet the plans developed in some Arab countries did

not achieve the required participation. The total lack of community participation and the campaign against non-governmental organizations in many Arab countries are key challenges that hinder the achievement of the desired partnership development. On the other hand, the 2030 Agenda includes a wide range of goals and targets, which poses a great difficulty for states and parties concerned with turning them into comprehensive, consistent and efficient development plans, and makes commitment to the principle of interdependence and integration between goals and targets within an integrated approach very difficult. It should be noted that the 17 goals and 169 targets will be monitored using a series of global

indicators that have been approved by the 47th session of the Statistical Commission in March 2016⁴.

The governments will have to develop their own national indicators to help monitor progress in terms of achieving the nationally adopted goals and targets. This is a complex and challenging matter for Arab governments. The Arab region is not known for coordination and cooperation between ministries and within departments or for achieving total coherence of public policies. Rather, it is common in this region that good plans may sometimes be developed but not implemented at all, or executed with bad implementation mechanisms. This prevents linking national strategies with budget allocations, follow-up, and accountability mechanisms. Back to the developed national plans, most of them were not coupled with implementation strategies or methods, or feasibility studies assessing the possibility of realizing goals on the ground. This raises questions about the seriousness in achieving the goals while the Arab countries tend to follow the United Nations and international financial

institutions’ inclinations to improve their economic and political situation, without a real assessment of the suitability of these inclinations to [these countries respective] national situation.

⁴ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-E.pdf>

IV. The Notes of Civil Society Organizations

I. At the national policy level:

1) Reconsidering the development model:

Achieving sustainable development and meeting the Agenda's requirements require a change of the current development model, the options, and the economic and social policies, so as not to be limited to the concept of economic growth and rely on the principles of justice and equality. This requires paying attention to the structural, economic, social, demographic, geographic challenges and others, which generate inequalities, and affect the countries' options. All development partners; national, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, should cooperate to protect the national policies space, which is strained by globalization, which is considered a necessary condition to achieve the right to development, and a prerequisite for the success of the national development strategy, in conjunction with the international obligation to respect countries' sovereignty.

- Highlighting the cultural and political dimensions since they constitute two main components of the development process, in addition to the economic, social and environmental dimensions. The conflicts, displacement, and declining development plaguing the region and which are clearly associated with political and cultural dimensions, consecrate the need for a comprehensive multi-dimensional development approach that addresses the root cause of the problems in the region and not only remedies the consequences. This approach also requires building on the different resources and capacities available in the Arab region, noting that culture and heritage richness, as well as human capacities are important opportunities that must be banked on in terms of development planning.

- Revitalizing the role of the state as a key player in the development process, particularly in terms of respecting, protecting and ensuring citizens' rights, compelling investors and capitalists to abide by the necessary standards, laws, and measures, and shifting from the concept of care and targeting to the concept of comprehensive social protection. The role of the state concerning the relationship with other development partners must be focused on in order to lead a social dialogue between the various economic and social constituents, including representatives from the business sector, the civil society organizations, trade unions, and women, youth, cultural movements, including disabled persons. This will help determining the role of each of the parties in the development process and social protection.

- Redistribution through the tax system, on the condition

of fair distribution of cost, limitation of tax evasion, and exemptions aimed at attracting investment without taking into consideration the resulting widening gap of inequality. The concept of wages must be reexamined, since it is a means of redistribution and expansion of the consumer base in the community, which enhances production.

- Calling on the Arab states, governments, and development partners to exert pressure for the adoption of an international framework for debt restructuring based on the basic principles adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, while identifying the coordination mechanisms between the donors, and placing development and human rights at the center of its priorities.

- Highlighting the basic role of the private sector in the development process, particularly in terms of investments and production, with a focus on the need to be alert to the risks of partnerships between the public and private sectors in light of poor public institutions in the Arab countries, which leads to an imbalance in these partnerships in favour of the private sector, and violates the citizen's right to access public services, because of high prices or lack of service quality or financial overloading of public budgets. Focus should also be on the need to adopt clear mechanisms to regulate the role of the private sector in the development process, and to adopt a binding international convention based on human rights standards and ensuring the multinational companies' abidance by their duties across borders according to the Maastricht principles.

- Stressing that Goal 16 is pivotal to the Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region, including: peace and security, and good governance (anti-corruption, recovery of stolen assets, modernization of management, transparency, access to information ... etc), since there is no security and no peace without governance, and vice versa. Ensuring human rights and good governance and ensuring this interdependence between peace, security and sustainable development, is at the heart of the transition process in the Arab region.

- Emphasizing the importance of Goal 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" but with the need to ensure that all national policies and strategies follow approaches aiming at achieving gender equality by promoting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women as a strategic priority for achieving sustainable development.

- The need to adopt a new holistic development framework based on the human rights principles set forth in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and ensuring the representation of the various categories of disabled persons at all stages of formulation of the regional and national development plans. Legislations must be issued, which must take into account international standards and conventions that promote the economic and social integration of disabled people. These legislations must be stringently implemented and an appropriate environment must be ensured at the public and private institutions level to

achieve integration. Moreover, the various technological and awareness means must be provided to facilitate and guarantee the participation of disabled persons at all stages and levels. This is in addition to capacity building and job skills development of disabled people as well as raising the awareness of the community and employers on the culture of integration and diversity and highlighting the potentials of persons with disabilities.

2) Drawing and implementing national plans: The human rights approach is the base of the 2030 Agenda, and must have a direct impact when making choices, drawing policies, and

making comparisons (pros & cons) between benefit and right. All development parties, including the private sector, governments, and civil society, must abide by human rights as a reference. The successful implementation of the Agenda largely depends on the national action, which requires:

- Mainstreaming sustainable development and national goals within the scope of national development plans and strategies (or develop new plans for this purpose) and following-up on their full implementation.
- Developing an efficient institutional framework ensuring coordination and dialogue with various stakeholders, in order to plan and set strategies, follow-up on their implementation, and monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs, which is essential to activate accountability mechanisms at the national level.
- Set priorities according to the national contexts through a transparent and participatory national process aimed to define priorities and guided by the level of ambition of the global sustainable development goals and targets, but taking into account the national circumstances.
- Strive to achieve integration at the national plans level outside the scope of the sectoral concept and follow an integrated approach in terms of national development efforts. This requires working beyond individual goals and targets and searching for the objective nexus existing between them.

II. At the regional level

The Arab region is witnessing regional and cross border challenges, in terms of stability, security, migrant workforce, and natural resources. In this respect the participants stress on the following:

- The importance of regional cooperation to find solutions and policies ensuring the sustainability of resources and a decent life for all.
- The need to think about regional production chains, allowing the workforce to move between states according to supply, enhancing the productive capacity, reducing competition, and contributing to the expansion of markets and the movement of goods.
- The importance of increasing funding from within the

region and developing a regional financing mechanism to achieve the SDGs.

- The importance of cooperating with the League of Arab States institutions, particularly within the context of the 2016-2026 Decade of Arab Civil Society Organizations to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, which binds the League of Arab States and Member States to strengthen partnership with civil society in order to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs. This is in addition to the importance of the role of the civil society in keeping up with the Arab efforts at the regional and national levels, particularly in terms of developing plans and programs and taking part in their implementation, developing the capacities of the stakeholders, working on assessing efforts and commitments, and following-up on the adopted accountability mechanisms.

- The need to call the United Nations regional organization, particularly the ESCWA — in its capacity as the entity responsible for coordinating the work of the UN in terms of following-

up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to assume an efficient role in finding areas of communication and dialogue between governments, civil society and the private sector and to be committed to assume its role in seeing to the various development partners' abidance by the requirements of implementing the 2013 Agenda.

III. At the international level

- The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires uniting the efforts of all parties concerned with development at the national, regional and international levels, and building a genuine international partnership based on respect, equality and commitment to the Human Rights System and the orientations and terms of reference of the global Agenda.

- It is necessary to exert pressure and act in order for the trading system to become development-oriented and to give developing countries the right to catch up with the developed countries in terms of development and to use the tools that allowed these developed countries to attain their current levels of development. It is also necessary that the assessment of the developing countries' future trade integration capacity be coupled with the assessment of the implications of the trade agreements, concluded and to be concluded, on the economic and social levels. It is also necessary that the trade agreements concluded between developing and developed countries include the right to a political space as a standard example, allowing developing countries to reconsider their economic growth support policies in terms of generation of job opportunities and development and the reduction of the potential negative consequences that may result from future liberalization.

- It is necessary that developing countries exert pressure in order to achieve more transparency, democracy and participation. A successful and efficient method of access to information must be provided. The voting system must be reexamined, including in the

international financial institutions, so as to increase the efficiency of representation and influence of developing countries in the decisions of these institutions.

- It is necessary to exert pressure to stop the flow of arms, limit illicit financial flows, and recover stolen assets that are important in our region as well.

The participants in the workshop — who participated in the activities of the ESCWA Regional Forum on Sustainable Development held in Amman on May 29-30, 2016, and who contributed actively in the discussions of this Forum and formulated the notes that were issued by it support the content of these notes that the ESCWA will submit to the Global High Level Policy Forum in July 2016.

The participants believe that the positions, notes, and recommendations contained in this declaration are in line with the notes of the Forum and contain additional complementary notes or positions that are more distinguished and specific than the independent position of the civil society organizations that participated in the workshop and that are consistent with the reached outcome and push this outcome one step forward from the perspective of a specific development party, that is the civil society.

Consultation 2017

Role of CSOs in Implementing Agenda 2030
3-4 July 2017

League of Arab States General Headquarters – Cairo
Final Report and Recommendations



I. Introduction:

As part of the implementation of the Arab Decade for Civil Society Organizations, adopted by the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers through decision 793 in its 35th regular session (December 2015) on the role of CSOs in supporting Arab efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, the League of Arab States' General Secretariat (CSO Directorate), in coordination with the Arab NGO Network for

Development and the Economic and Social Council for Western Asia (ESCWA), organized the Arab Conference on the Role of CSOs in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, on the 3rd and 4th of July 2017 at the League of Arab States General Headquarters in Cairo.

The conference included CSOs from the Jordanian Hashemite Kingdom, the Republic of Tunisia, the State of Palestine, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Mauritanian Islamic Republic, and the Republic of Yemen, in addition to ANND members from the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Kuwait, the Egyptian Arab Republic, the Republic of Sudan, the Republic of Lebanon, the State of Libya, and the Republic of Yemen, as well as several Arab experts in the domain of civil work.

The conference is a continuation of ANND's efforts in the post-2015 process, starting in 2013, through participating in several national, regional, and global initiatives to integrate the SDGs in Arab civil society's agenda; publishing several reports on progress in Arab countries; and organizing interactive national dialogues to grab the attention and of various actors regarding pertinent issues and level the ground for them.

The conference aimed at issuing common recommendations, representing the point of view of Arab CSOs, to be recommended at the HLPF in New York, held between the 12th and 19th of July 2017. The conference highlighted the progress made in the SDG implementation process, allowed for the exchange of successful national experiments in this regard, and focused on main challenges faced by the process on the national and regional levels.

The conference began with a welcoming note and approval of the agenda, which focused on the realities of implementing Agenda 2030 for sustainable development in Arab countries. It tackled several themes; from the role of Arab CSOs in implementing sustainable development to the challenges they face, in addition to unpacking the efforts made to achieve sustainable development in the Arab and global contexts. Other themes included discussion of poverty eradication policies and achieving social welfare and gender equality in Arab countries, as well as building a world of peace and security.

II. Role of Arab CSOs and Challenges Faced in the Context of Sustainable Development

The discussions highlighted the importance of the role played by Arab CSOs in the development process and the pertinence of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, being a transformative, comprehensive, and ambitious. It was approved by the governments of Arab States, which makes it a viable chance to discuss public policies from a developmental and rights-based perspective, contributing to the achievement of SDGs.

In this regard, the experts pointed to the importance of expanding the concept of development to include all dimensions: economic, social, and environmental, with an emphasis on the importance of political, cultural, and civilizational dimensions in any real developmental process. They also emphasized the importance of adopting a rights-based approach and linking the various dimensions, moving away from the theoretical framework to identify approaches that fit national and regional trends. They also pointed out the presence of key and integrated challenges faced by Arab CSOs, the most important of which probably being the lack of dialogue among stakeholders in various Arab countries, as well as not including CSOs in many planning processes, which require the adoption of a holistic approach founded on sustainable human development, human rights, public freedoms, and democracy as a basis to achieve development.

Following are some of the key challenges identified in the discussion and which require intervention on the policy and developmental planning levels in the region:

- Failing to involve developmental partners (such as the private sector, CSOs, Trade Unions, and the media) in some Arab countries in policy-making and developmental planning, which impacts the quality of adopted policies and efficiency of implementation. Despite Agenda 2030's emphasis on the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable development, the plans adopted by some Arab countries were not based on the required participation.
- Arab political culture, which is mainly characterized by the lack of culture of volunteerism, citizenship, and respect of plurality, in addition to the confusion around the term "civil society" and its scope and practices, with

an emphasis that civil society and its components are political and not non-partisan, due to their interest in development, human rights, and improving economic situations.

- Other challenges faced by Arab civil society is the idea that modern civil society was not a natural development of Arab society and that it was imported, which means that it will remain linked to the outside through networking and funding.

Several recommendations were agreed upon in this regard. They are:

- Emphasizing the importance of the concept of partnership on the national and international levels among all stakeholders (governments, civil society, private sector). However, the partnership should be actual and not just formal and based on dialogue among stakeholders, through enhancing the role of institutions and frameworks governing such dialogues, including the League of Arab State's Economic and Social Council, in light of the transformation from a unipolar world to an international system based on multiples regional poles, which is also dependent on conditional funding that suits the donors without taking into consideration the special circumstances of each country in achieving the 2030 SDGs.

- Emphasizing that working on development requires an climate of prosperity and peace. SDG Goal 16 is intended to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development," which requires putting an end to wars and armed conflicts, achieving stability; ending the Israeli occupation through peaceful approaches to conflict resolution and adopting dialogue to address differences and find suitable solutions for all sides; and adopting comprehensive approaches to the root causes of the instability in the region, related to the political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, which directly impact the developmental process.

- The need to address terrorism and its sources and emphasizing that civil society is a true partner in fighting terrorism, since the current environment of CSO work in some Arab countries are restrictive as a result of some practices by a few CSOs. There is a need to address the root causes of terrorism and its repercussions, which delay the developmental process in the region, due to its

impact on the rise of poverty and unemployment levels and the absence of job opportunities, in addition to inequalities and the absence of approaches based on human rights and democracy.

- To achieve sustainable development, there is a need to re-evaluate the role of civil society on the regional level, through the presence of an enabling environment, which provides the legal, organizational, and political conditions that affect the ability of civil society to engage in Agenda 2030, in addition to the need to involve civil society in all stages: planning, policy implementation, programming, follow-up, and review.

- The need to involve trade unions and not emptying them of their contents or neglecting the important role

they play in achieving development.

- The need to support the capacities of CSOs, improve their efficiency and ability to achieve developmental work based on the Istanbul Principles, and empower them to play their roles and face challenges.

III. Arab and International Frameworks for Agenda 2030:

This session focused on international and regional efforts in the process to implement sustainable development. It discussed the Arab Decade for Civil Society Organizations, which is an unprecedented commitment by Arab states in the LAS to involve CSOs in development efforts. On 13/12/2015, Arab Social Affairs ministers meeting in Sharm

el-Sheikh adopted the Arab Decade as an important text to enhance the participation of Arab civil society in implementing the SDGs, based on which the LAS announced that the period between 2016 and 2026 will be an Arab Decade for CSOs, under the title, "Supporting CSOs to Achieve SDGs."

The session also pointed to the efforts of the LAS General Secretariat in amending regulations and standards related to granting observer status to CSOs (In the context of developing the working team charged with advancing LAS's popular dimension in joint Arab work) to allow them to participate in all events held by the LAS General

Secretariat, including the Arab Parliament and the Human Rights Committee. This was considered a positive development towards allowing CSOs to participate in the process of common Arab work and the path towards development.

The session also pointed to the Arab Week for Sustainable Development, organized by the LAS General Secretariat, in cooperation with the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation, the World Bank, and the UNDP, under the auspices of President of the Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah al-Sisi between 14 and 17 May 2017, in the Arab Republic of Egypt. Several issues pertaining to the Arab region were discussed during the week, in the framework of following up the SDG 2030 plan. The themes included: human dignity and quality of life; climate threats; promoting peace, security, and justice; science, technology, and innovation; women's empowerment; children and family protection; and other SDGs. In the week's final statement, participants stressed the importance of activating, building, and expanding partnerships among all development actors, including

international and regional organizations, CSOs, the private sector, and governments, in addition to providing the necessary support for an effective implementation of the Arab Sustainable Development Plan.

Also highlighted was the Arab Sustainable Development Forum 2017, held in Rabat between 3 and 5 May 2017, which focused on: Activating the Sustainable Development Plan for the year 2030: Poverty Eradication and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Arab Region. The forum is held annually by the UN regional system and the LAS, organized by ESCWA and involves all development partners, such as civil society, the private sector, academia, the media, parliamentarians, and the UN.

The session issued the following recommendations:

- Prepare an action plan to implement the Arab Decade for CSOs (2016-2026), adopted in December 2015, with the participation of experts from Arab CSOs and other regional and international experts, aiming to fast-track the activities

and programs of the Arab Decade and stressing the need to involve Arab, regional, and international civil society organizations, unions, networks, and other entities in the activities – since this Decade was adopted specifically to support Arab CSOs working on implementing the SDGs 2030.

- Requesting from the General Secretariat to expedite the finalization of regulations and standards related to granting observer status to CSOs, to facilitate their engagement in the development process.

- Stressing the importance of coordination among development partners to avoid duplication and ensure efficiency in implementing the goals, through exchanging expertise and best practices and working in an integrated manner.

- Working towards establishing a regional mechanism to build consensus on funding issues on the regional level and activating commitments and promises, in through the involvement of the Arab private sector to replace foreign funding, while stressing that it should be committed to social and environmental responsibility and human rights.

- Stressing the importance of regional cooperation in the fields of knowledge and technology, to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

- Augmenting trade cooperation among the countries of the Arab region in a developmental context.

IV. Public Policies to Eradicate Poverty in all its Forms

The session discussed the size of poverty, inequality, actual unemployment, and informal labor produced by the developmental models adopted in some Arab countries, despite some indicators relating to economic growth. Those countries' economies were founded on developmental models based on import and neglected the development of production capacities in value added sectors that could generate jobs, expand the economy, and be based on the SDGs and the peoples' economic and social rights.

Priority was given to integration in the global economy through freeing trade, investment, borrowing, privatization, and wholesale lifting of economic constraints.

Reports have shown that these measures did not achieve economic growth in some Arab countries, while poverty, unemployment, and inequality expanded drastically.

Markets, on the other hand, did not function in the desired manner.

These trends indicate the need to review domestic and global factors contributing to their promotion, based on the issues tackled by Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, such as achieving full and productive employment; providing decent jobs for all women, children, young people, and people with disabilities; and achieving equal for pay for equal work by 2030. In the next 5 years, the Agenda will particularly aim to achieve a tangible decrease in the number of young people without jobs, education, or training and will encourage the formalization of work. The Agenda also calls for respecting worker's rights and providing safe and secure work environments for all workers, including migrant workers, especially women migrant workers and those in precarious jobs.

Arab economies are growing, but not at a rate that can meet the increasing demand for decent jobs. Participants pointed to the 2016 Arab Human Development Report, which mentioned the need to provide 60 million jobs before 2020 to accommodate new entrants to the job market, not to mention improving work conditions, which brings out the question of informal labor. The Arab region is witnessing an increase of informal labor, due to several factors, including "liberalization" policies and neoliberal globalization, the youth bulge, rural migration to cities, and large waves of migration, in addition to the rentier nature of economies in most Arab countries.

Added to that, the structure of the international financial system, preferring flows from developing countries to developed countries, is a major factor in the accumulation of public debt and weak investment in the Arab region. This leads to weaknesses on the economic and financial levels in some Arab countries, which reproduce national priorities at the expense of sustainable development.

Participants suggested the following recommendations, which could contribute to eradicating poverty, improving policies, and guaranteeing access to equal opportunities in the job market for all:

- Work towards reforming public institutions, fighting corruption, and activating accountability mechanisms.
- The importance of promoting joint Arab action to face various challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and weak natural resources, particularly in light of armed conflict and instability in some Arab countries.
- The need to encourage regional development policies to support productive activities, based on the needs, resources, and market of each country, and which would contribute to creating decent and sustainable job opportunities.
- Calling on the UN and LAS to continue efforts to support the treatment of the displaced and refugee issues, using an approach that guarantees their rights and dignity, due to the impact of the situation on political, social, and economic stability, which is leading to demographic changes that could impact the social fabric and human development, contributing to rising tensions and impacting development efforts and increasing marginalization.
- Promote redistributive policies, in order to reduce inequalities, through providing universal social protection and fair taxation policies. The development of universal social protection systems is an international obligation. However, these systems should surpass traditional systems of social protection limited to illness, unemployment, old age, disability, and workplace accidents. Countries should allocate a social budget with various types of social remittances and free education and healthcare, which would allow vulnerable social groups to benefit from all social services.
- The need to benefit from the opportunity of the “youth wave” today, before society gets old, as in some advanced countries, which makes the possibility of achieving financial balances in a universal social services system even more difficult.

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economic and financial levels in some Arab countries, which reproduce national priorities at the expense of sustainable development.

Participants suggested the following recommendations, which could contribute to eradicating poverty, improving policies, and guaranteeing access to equal opportunities in the job market for all:

- Work towards reforming public institutions, fighting corruption, and activating accountability mechanisms.
- The importance of promoting joint Arab action to face various challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and weak natural resources, particularly in light of armed conflict and instability in some Arab countries.
- The need to encourage regional development policies to support productive activities, based on the needs, resources, and market of each country, and which would contribute to creating decent and sustainable job opportunities.
- Calling on the UN and LAS to continue efforts to support the treatment of the displaced and refugee issues, using an approach that guarantees their rights and dignity, due to the impact of the situation on political, social, and economic stability, which is leading to demographic changes that could impact the social fabric and human development, contributing to rising tensions and impacting development efforts and increasing marginalization.
- Promote redistributive policies, in order to reduce inequalities, through providing universal social protection and fair taxation policies. The development of universal social protection systems is an international obligation. However, these systems should surpass traditional systems of social protection limited to illness, unemployment, old age, disability, and workplace accidents. Countries should allocate a social budget with various types of social remittances and free education and healthcare, which would allow vulnerable social groups to benefit from all social services.
- The need to benefit from the opportunity of the “youth wave” today, before society gets old, as in some advanced countries, which makes the possibility of achieving financial balances in a universal social services system even more difficult.

VI. Implementing and Financing Agenda 2030:

Participants pointed to the fact that most tax systems in some Arab countries are characterized by stable and diverse sources of financial revenues, but at lower levels than developing countries or countries in emerging markets. In Arab countries, tax revenues reached an average of 7% of the GDP between 2013 and 2016, which is less than the 17% average for developing markets and other developing countries. Tax systems in the Arab region suffer from the dominance of indirect taxes, reaching an average of 65%. The region also suffers from low tax compliance, due in part to the size of the informal economy, in addition to weak technical and institutional skills needed to register taxpayers and follow-up on collection.

Due to this situation, Arab countries are similar in the limited proportion of tax revenue contribution to public spending in the budget, which increases the need for external aid and raises the size of the public debt, which is accumulating throughout the region, in addition to declining investment. Public debt in Arab countries reached 52% in 2015, noting that its size and servicing costs in most Arab countries represent the most important challenges to achieving sustainable development and whose burden will be borne by future generations.

Despite the role played by ODA in non-oil producing Arab countries to cover gaps in funding, the developmental impact of this type of finances remains weak, due to conditionalities and political considerations, with an increasing focus on humanitarian aid and less on long-term developmental needs.

The participants suggested the following recommendations to provide necessary resources to achieve sustainable development by 2030:

- Establishing or promoting national bodies and forums on sustainable development and emphasizing that they should include broad representation and at a high level to develop development strategies, where civil society is a full and active partner in setting priorities, planning, implementation, and follow-up.
- The need to establish national indicators to monitor progress in implementing the nationally adopted goals and objectives and to promote coordination and cooperation between ministries and inside administrations, as well as achieving overall policy coherence.
- Achieve tax justice to contribute to redistribution, through implementing progressive taxes to address inequalities and focus on collecting direct taxes on income and wealth, instead of indirect taxes related to consumption. It is also important to expand the tax

base to guarantee better social justice and allocate resources to benefit the most vulnerable segments in society and achieve balance between taxes on individuals (in the form of income taxes) and taxes on sales on one side, and taxes imposed on companies and major investments, on the other.

VII. Achieving Gender Equality and Enhancing the Participation of Women in the Arab Region:

In conclusion, the participants extended their gratitude to the League of Arab States and its General Secretary, H.E. Mr. Ahmad Aboul Gheit for hosting this event at the LAS headquarters, due to the pioneering and unprecedented role played by the LAS in integrating CSOs from Arab countries with other developmental partners, in order to achieve a real leap in the development process in Arab countries and prosperity for all. Special thanks were extended to the social affairs department, especially the CSO Administration in LAS, for its role in supporting Arab CSOs and allowing them the space for participation, being a forum where they can express their opinions and concerns in a democratic and unrestricted manner for a better future for our Arab societies.

Agenda 2030 is based on achieving sustainable development on the economic, social and environmental levels. It aims to promote peace as a main condition for sustainable development. Various experiences in development show that it is impossible to achieve economic empowerment for all without the empowerment of women and that there is no social development without full gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination. Statistics indicate a decrease in women's participation in the job market in general and several studies indicate that the MENA region is one of the least developed in terms of economic participation of women.

The gender gap overlaps with all other gaps representing other aspects of discrimination, such as on the basis of religion, sect, geographical location, class, or other. The more women face these other types of gaps, the worse the situation. For example, poor illiterate women in least developed regions are the most vulnerable at all in an informal labor market.

The following recommendations were suggested in the session:

- The need to elaborate a unified Arab vision on Agenda 2030 from a gender perspective and based on the region's priorities.
- Enhance aspects of independence for women, including economic and political independence, and putting an end to all forms of violations and discrimination, adopting a systematic approach to gender in all aspects of the development agenda.
- The need for Gender Responsive Budgeting, through adopting social and economic policies that respond to the various and different needs of men and women, as an important tool to limit gender inequality.

Consultation 2018

Messages from Civil Society to the Arab
Forum for Sustainable Development 2018 and
the High Level Political Forum 2018



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية



اللعم المتحدة
الاقتصاد
ESCWA



CAWTAR



الاتحاد العربي للمنتابات
ARAB TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION



الشبكة
العربية
لديمقراطية
الانتخابات



TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
the global coalition against corruption



الشبكة العربية للبيئة والتنمية "رائد"
Arab Network for Environment and Development "ANED"



Housing & Land Rights Network
Habitat International Coalition

On the occasion of the 2018 High-level Political Forum on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, Arab civil society organizations (CSOs) contribute to the discourse on the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their implementation, monitoring and evaluation through 2036. That contribution builds on the regional consultation of the Arab SDG Platform, meeting at Beirut, –22–23 April 2018, and presented at the Arab [states] Forum for Sustainable Development, 24–26 April 2018. The meeting, in which HIC-HLRN took active part, produced a critical analysis of the sustainable development challenges and priorities (available below), summarized here as a series of agreed key messages. These form a program of proposed measures toward:

1. Achieving peace and security and safeguarding the integrity of states in the Arab region is a priority, in accordance with the political declaration by the UN, which links development and peace, in the framework of international law and is governed by the UN System.
2. Providing services and protection for refugees in countries of refuge (the region contains %46 of the global refugee population) and working toward their safe and voluntary return to their original places of residence, according to international law.
3. Respecting national policy space, including economic and social policies, as a component of the right to development, and implementing governance standards and frameworks for monitoring commitments in a manner that enhances national ownership of policies, particularly under political conditions compatible with development cooperation.
4. Adopting a new development paradigm based on the human rights approach and shifting from unproductive rentier economies to real productive economies that develop value-added sectors generating decent jobs, while adopting redistribution policies to reverse inequalities, social polarization and marginalization.
5. Adopting comprehensive and rights-based social-protection systems that ensure social protection floors that should include refugees, displaced persons and migrant workers.
6. Adopting comprehensive national integrity systems that guarantee the principles of good governance and fighting corruption, in the state’s legislative, judiciary and executive pillars, in addition to independent bodies, civil society, the media and the private sector. This includes regulating the relationship between and among those sectors and enacting laws guaranteeing a comprehensive approach to participation, accountability, transparency and disclosure, replacing a culture of violence and exclusion.
7. Granting due importance to addressing the cultural foundations of discrimination against women in our societies and in public policies, and protecting women, especially in times of war and conflict, while fighting the culture of violence and exclusion against women and girls.
8. Providing an enabling safe environment for civil society to practice its role freely and independently, and developing legislation that achieves that, including the human rights to information and freedom of expression, and institutionalizing its effective participation on the national level, in the Arab League, and in other regional and international forums.
9. Establishing an Arab fund for sustainable human development (including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda), and establishing mechanisms for funding it through Arab sources, such as regional taxes on the use of natural resources (oil and gas), and financial investment and speculation among Arab countries.
10. Adopting an inclusive non-discriminatory development framework based on human rights principles enshrined in international instruments, particularly the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the rights of other groups excluded from the developmental process, and taking appropriate measures to put this framework into practice.
11. Committing to the requirements of sustainability at the national, regional and international levels and by the private sector, while respecting the peoples’ sovereignty over their natural resources and right to adopt sustainable policies that safeguard the rights of future generations.
12. Adopting binding standards that hold the private sector accountable for its practices and responsible for human rights their consequences and for its part in development, as part of the international effort to implement “a binding treaty on human rights and business.”
13. Implementing the recommendation of the 2016 Doha Meeting and the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development to identify a specific set of goals and objectives that reflect regional priorities, and to form an immediate work program for development parties in the Arab region. Civil society remains prepared to work on implementing this recommendation in partnership with all stakeholders.

The Regional Meeting for CSOs on Sustainable Development in the Arab Region

The Reality of Development in the Arab Region: Challenges and Recommendations

Outcome Document

I. General Introduction

While work was ongoing on achieving the Millennium Goals, the world witnessed unprecedented economic and financial crises, and a surge in inequality and poverty levels, in addition to numerous risks pertaining to natural resources and climate change. The Arab world, in particular, has witnessed since the end of 2010 a political and popular movement that stemmed out from the need to achieve social justice, political participation, dignity, political and personal rights, and the need to end all forms of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion on the basis of political, religious, ethnic, or economic affiliation, or on the basis of gender, age, or disability.

From the onset of discussions on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, civil society organizations (CSOs) and their regional and national networks participated in many regional and international initiatives in partnership with various parties, such as the offices and programs of national and regional UN agencies, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the Arab League, in an endeavour to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs), specify the priorities of the Arab region, and include the Arab civil society in the development process.

These forums recommended that the 2030 Agenda should launch from a rights-based approach that places social justice, equality, diversity and inclusion at its core, and pay attention to the structural impediments in the global economic and trade systems. They also called for taking into consideration the political and cultural dimensions as pivotal components of the concept of sustainable human development, much like the other economic, social, and environmental dimensions. These two dimensions must be included in national, regional, and global development strategies.

The Regional CSO Meeting on Sustainable Development was held in preparation for the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development 2018 at the initiative of the following organizations: the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), the Arab Trade Union Confederation, the Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Arab Network for Democratic Elections, the Arab Network for Environment and Development, the Arab branch of Habitat International Coalition, and the Arab branch of Transparency International. The meeting was organized with the support of ESCWA, and attended by over fifty organizations from the civil society, and about sixty-five participants and experts, as well as numerous UN organizations (World Health Organization, United Nations Development Program, UN Women, and ESCWA). The meeting was a crucial preparatory step prior to the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development, which will witness the participation of Arab governments, Arab League, and the UN system in the Arab region.

II. Challenges Facing the Arab Region

Mammoth challenges continue to face development in the Arab region, some of which are linked to the global situation and the power balance of the global political economy, while others relate to regional ties, or the nature of the Arab neo-patrimonial states, rentier economies, and corruption of the governance system. On top of that, the region suffers from crises, armed conflicts, occupation, and political instability. Although one cannot offer a comprehensive presentation of all these challenges, the following paragraphs highlight the most important ones and the most relevant to the topic of the meeting, from the point of view of participating CSOs.

1. Peace and Security

Wars and armed conflicts are not new to the Arab region. After all, the region has the longest surviving colonialism in modern history, that is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, which continues to adopt expansion policies and continues to encroach upon human rights and international law. This occupation of an entire people's land is a gross violation of the right to self-determination. It is made worse by the adoption of occupying authorities of apartheid and siege policies, as well as aggressive expansion policies that disrupt peace and stability in the entire region. These policies

violate the right of the Palestinian people and all other peoples in the region for development. On the other hand, a number of countries that passed through political and institutional transformations faced after 2011 serious political and security setbacks that caused humanitarian catastrophes and had devastating repercussions on countries, people, and development. Henceforth, we do not believe that crises, wars, peace, and stability in the Arab region can be dealt with in a manner that ignores the difference in their nature and actors, and dismisses the fact that these wars and conflicts constitute an organic component of the international scene and are caused by geostrategic and economic interests of major countries or countries that are internationally and regionally active and directly responsible for the rise, price, and continuity of said conflicts. Alternatively, we do not consider conflicts and wars to be separate from the socio-economic and cultural regimes that fueled or produced them, which are internal factors and dynamics. Thus, it is essential to reconsider the development and governance paradigms adopted in the Arab region, or those that will be adopted in the future, and to seriously contemplate new models as well as rearrange relations with the surrounding and the international system, particularly in countries where construction and reconstruction projects are being discussed, which carry with them the risk of replicating the same problems and crises as before, if not bringing about more serious ones.

Speaking of crises and wars, one must note that there has been a shift in the rhetoric of global organizations towards focusing on the concept of resilience. This concept refers to the ability of communities to adapt, learn, and endure during times of crisis and trauma. This common concept of resilience is based on a neoliberal approach that places the weight of the responsibility on the shoulders of the victims of conflict to adapt with the situation, without seeking to address the causes and sources of these crises. This approach represents a retreat from the rights-based approach, as it absolves those who caused the conflict or fueled its continuity from responsibility and accountability, and deals with crises as matters of fate or natural disasters that one must acclimate to. Thus, it is crucial to keep the rights approach at the core of the development rhetoric for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and not recoil from it. It is equally pivotal not to adopt partial approaches that proved their futility in achieving development, or addressing the causes of crises, or even avoiding the risk of their recurrence.

2. Economic Challenges in Light of Conflicts

It is no longer sufficient to criticize Arab economies as rent economies, as many of these economies have morphed into “war economies” (the entire Arab region has to some extent). This is either a direct or

indirect result of wars and crises, which bring about an increase in military expenditure, a restructuring of national expenditure priorities, a change in the nature and size of economic activity, a disruption of economic mechanisms, and restrictions on citizens’ freedoms and rights. This includes, in one way or another, states that are not directly involved in crises and armed conflicts, but live in fear of getting involved in regional crises. These crises limit the state’s ability to expand productive economy, and force it to adopt austerity policies at the expense of social and developmental priorities. This qualitative transformation gives rise to organized groups whose interests are vested in the continuation of war and conflicts, and aim to disrupt any political settlement. Over the years, they transform into organized groups of economic and political interests that impose their agenda over the conflict resolution and reconstruction agenda, in stark contrast to the development and rights approaches.

Therefore, it is necessary for discussions on the 2030 Agenda to address means to mend this aspect, in the context of developing alternatives to austerity policies that embrace the reality of Arab states while taking into consideration the rights approach of the required development paradigm.

The old development paradigm, modeled after the conventional neoliberal prototype adopted for decades in regional countries even after the Arab Spring, proved to be unsustainable and incapable of achieving welfare and stability for the people of the region. Accordingly, it is imperative to reflect on a new paradigm for societal organization, economic structures, and political and constitutional institutions that can achieve sustainable development and peace. In this regard, the building and reconstruction process in countries that almost had their entire social fabric destroyed along with their ties, institutions, and resources, should not transform into a mere opportunity for investing in reconstruction and infrastructure projects; it should not be dealt with as a profitable investment opportunity for global mega-corporations. These countries, starting from Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia (which are the most tragic cases) need first and foremost a political resolution that takes into account international law and human rights, economic and social policies, and innovative institutional arrangements that guarantee sustainable development and peace as well as address previous problems and crises on the basis of the human rights system and human dignity.

3. The Obstructive Global Economic System

The development paradigm in the Arab region has long followed common international formulas based on austerity measures, with an effort to attract foreign investment regardless of its goals or sources, and without taking into account issues of social justice

and marginalized groups. This was accompanied by a neo-patrimonial system and unproductive rentier economies that lacked redistribution mechanisms and social protection systems.

This paradigm is a structural challenge impeding development in the Arab region; and, it is greatly linked to the global economic and financial structure, which has yet to be reassessed. The basis of this global financial system is a financial economy instead of a real economy, which increases financial fluctuations. Moreover, the flows from developing countries to advanced ones are more sizeable than the ones flowing in the opposite direction, which adds to the public debt and weakens investments in the Arab region. Additionally, the structure of the global trade system does not accommodate between the capabilities and economies of developing states on the one hand, and the openness of their markets and their involvement in the global markets on the other. The global trade system does not take development into account. Even the trade wars we currently witness pose a threat on economic growth globally. The USA, which benefited for decades from open trade, is now moving towards a protectionist economy, following the rise of some developing countries like China and the increase in global competition. In general, the global economic governance system does not allow the effective participation of developing countries, which prompted the 2030 Agenda to include a specific target for improving the representation of developing countries in international financial institutions, as part of goal 16 of the SDGs.

4. Unjust Taxation System

Taxation systems are shifting towards either reducing taxes on companies and increasing them on the consumer, through value added tax, or providing concessions and tax exemptions in light of a development paradigm that relies mainly on the role of the private sector. Arab taxation systems are characterized by feeble tax collection and tax evasion, which is linked in part to the weakness of concerned institutions. This is juxtaposed by an increase in the size of unstructured economy due to many factors, such as the policies of “openness”, globalization, neoliberalism, youth-bulge, rural-urban migration, and an influx of immigration, in addition to the nature of rentier economies.

The decline in tax revenues augments the need for external funding, consequently leading to an increase in debt and a decrease in investment. The public debt service has become a big part of the budget of numerous Arab countries, whereby these countries adopted a policy of negligence and procrastination or depended on unpredictable political deals. Taxes are an extremely important means of mobilizing domestic

resources and promoting accountability, citizenship, and economic and social integration. Yet, instead of handling taxation for the primary sustainable resource that it is, linked tightly to the national developmental and economic vision of a certain country, it is being used almost exclusively to cover the deficit or improve the financial balance of a state’s budget. With these givens at hand, the need for a paradigm shift in taxing systems and philosophies in Arab countries becomes paramount, including regaining the organizational role of the state in implementing policies that protect the rights of citizens, especially marginalized groups, and provide fair distribution of wealth.

The adopted approach to the objectives of tax systems, including the means of collection and redistribution, must be scrutinized, particularly the role taxes play in supporting the economy and encouraging investment in strategic sectors, which should be one of the priorities of the adopted national policy for the support of a real and productive economy in highly competitive sectors and sectors with added value that generate work opportunities.

5. Fragmented Social Protection

Social protection policies in Arab countries are mostly partial and targeted, and do not adopt a comprehensive rights approach. This social protection usually involves “social security networks” and social aid programs that offer momentary and limited solutions that do not break the cycle of poverty. These programs suffer from limited coverage, which often excludes or is unfair to informal workers, the unemployed, children, elderly, and persons with disabilities. They also suffer from bad governance and inadequate funding. These means and tools have proven unsuccessful in reducing poverty or even bridging the inequality gap in Arab societies; still, obstinacy rules the day, and promoting these programs that are alien to comprehensive social policies remains the trend, which goes against the 2030 agenda.

On the other hand, important international initiatives, such as the social protection floor initiative, do not garner the attention they deserve. Noting that these approaches can form a basis for working towards adopting comprehensive protection systems for all, which can be adapted to the social protection priorities of our region and added to the priority groups to be covered by the social protection floor, such a refugees, displaced persons, and migrant workers.

Due to austerity measures, promoted for by global financial institutions and adopted by Arab regimes, the rights of workers have been eliminated. Moreover, work flexibility is being promoted, which actually means work fragility. The reduction in spending on social protection has particularly impacted women, who were further burdened by care work, as a result of the gap left by the absence of the state.

6. Feeble Partnership with the Civil Society

Real and institutionalized dialogue in the Arab region between development partners is almost absent, and that includes the private sector, CSOs, workers' organizations, media, grass-root organizations, and marginalized groups' organizations. The civil society faces many obstacles when seeking to participate in charting policies, in the form of restrictions and oppression. This limits the capability of the state to adopt and implement inclusive, consistent, and effective development policies. This is caused by a weak democracy and an absence of a participatory model of governance. Stakeholders have no genuine participatory role in decision-making and implementing programs. Moreover, there is a lack of social dialogue and a difficulty in accessing information and resources.

7. Problems of International Partnership

Development cooperation among various partners is an important point mentioned in the 2030 Agenda, which is an improvement to the Millennium Goals. It stipulated partnership on the basis of «common but differentiated responsibility» for cooperation between developed and developing countries. There has been considerable resistance at the global level to limit this principle to the environmental aspect without expanding it to include other dimensions of the development process, and it continues to be an open struggle between the civil society and developing countries, and countries of the North, international companies and international financial institutions. Practically, this principle means the rearrangement of relations between partners at different levels and the distribution of roles and responsibilities to ensure comprehensive development. Arab countries are under considerable pressure from globalization, which affects the national policy space, and does not allow for policies that support the priorities of national development. This begs for reconsidering the relations that govern the global system and which hinder the development process. Providing a policy space indicates primarily disposing of conditionality, and providing a financial margin for the state to effectively contribute to the development process. Although official developmental aid played a major role in bridging financial gaps at some point, it failed to play a notable developmental role; especially that most of said aid turned to humanitarian aid under occurring crises, and a large portion of it was subject to political conditionality.

The 2030 Agenda presents itself as a transformative agenda (it is titled: "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"); henceforward, the SDGs must be viewed from this perspective. However, this is far from what is applied. Despite a slight change in the rhetoric of international financial institutions, the policies of liberalization, privatization,

and austerity continue to prevail, along with the priority of integrating into the global system. It should be noted that relying on a productive private sector that generates work opportunities can contribute to the developmental process; but, it cannot replace a developmental democratic state.

8. Bad Governance

Good governance is the foundation of development and building security and peace. SDG 16 stipulates that "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development." That is why good governance with all its branches must cross over all development goals and be a prerequisite for achieving development. Good governance generally includes the relation between the state and the citizen, which is based on the principles of democracy, participation, accountability, responsibility, and inclusion of all. Good governance requires national integrity systems, which include a set of laws that guarantee governance, social accountability, separation of powers, disclosure, and provide peace and justice. Yet, Arab states are witnessing increased corruption rates, as per the results of statistics on bribery mostly occurring in the security and judicial sectors. There is a lack of judicial independence in Arab countries, with what that indicates about a mechanism for accountability and follow-up on complaints capable of protecting marginalized groups. The judicial system is politicized in most instances, which reflects on its monitoring performance of the administration, the Constitution, and the finances. In addition to that, Arab states lack transparency in governing the private sector. Furthermore, the relation of said sector with the state itself is far from transparent, especially in light of the latter's weakness towards the private sector and major corporations on the one hand, and the lack of mechanisms of reporting on corruption and following-up on complaints on the other. This especially applies to the partnership between the private and public sectors. Good governance requires democratic electoral systems that allow the participation of women and youth, as well as parliaments that hold others accountable and are held accountable in turn. In this context, one must speak of the importance of ensuring freedom of the press, especially with increased incarceration rates of journalists, escalating to murder at times; and the right to access information must also be guaranteed. It is pivotal to provide the civil society with an enabling environment and to include it as an effective monitor since it is the sole sector whose motive and vested interest is purely monitoring the process.

However, governance is not merely an administrative crisis, nor is it limited to the national scale. The discussion of governance problems cannot be separated from the structure of the global system, which greatly leads to the spread of crony capitalism

and furthers the global trend of patrimonial capitalism, at the expense of capitalism which values labor, initiative, and competence. It also increases debts of developing countries. The limited policy space allowed to developing countries due to this global structure directly affects the sovereignty of the state and its ability to arrange its policies in accordance to its national priorities. This, consequently, leads to disrupting accountability and liability mechanisms and resorting once more to external accountability mechanisms.

It is necessary as well to speak of structural corruption in Arab regimes, and to open a fundamental discussion on the concept and meaning of corruption. Discussions, in the framework of the 2030 Agenda, focus on corruption in the form of abuse of power and public funds by people in authority, which requires the building of effective institutions and the promotion of judicial independence while ensuring transparency and accountability. But the corruption found in most Arab states is a structured and institutionalized one. Entire political systems and economic ties are now beyond accountability, with corruption often being the basic adopted pattern and the nucleus of the established relation between the citizen and the state. This is the main facet of the neo-patrimonial state. It is important to point here to the political aspect of corruption, that is its connection to the nature of the state and governance systems, and not only the technical or administrative aspect that can be confronted with already existing mechanisms. Additionally, corruption is not limited to the national level, but extends to diverse global mechanisms and institutions. Case in point is the Panama Papers, which revealed the dark secrets of the global tax evasion system. Moreover, many foreign institutions were revealed as actively corrupt parties, especially in post-conflict states.

9. Exclusion of Women

Arab states have the lowest rates of female participation in politics and economy. Although all Arab countries ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, reservations on its articles continue to prevent social, economic and political justice between women and men. This is largely due to the patriarchal culture that systematically excludes women (along with youth, teenagers, and all vulnerable groups of society). There are systematic attempts to exclude women from the political and economic domains. And in case women are involved, their participation remains simple and formal with the goal of adding legitimacy to a system that continues to be patriarchal at its core. Women are regularly excluded from decision-making posts, although their capabilities are exploited in the economic sphere, where they provide unpaid domestic work, care work, and cheap labor especially in the informal economy,

and in the political sphere, where they participate in protests and demonstrations. While there have been efforts to abolish discrimination in laws and introduce new ones to protect women from violence, a gap still exists between legislation and practice, the basis of which is the widespread patriarchal mentality and culture, and the lack of seriousness on the authorities' side in effecting their pledges and promises. It should be noted that this exclusionary patriarchal culture is not limited to women's rights and their status in society, but also includes other categories, and goes across various social, political and economic issues; it is rooted in a culture that glorifies power and violence.

The gender gap is intertwined with all other gaps, which represent other aspects of discrimination, whether on the basis of religion, sect, geographical location, class, and others. The situation worsens if a woman falls into more than one of these discriminatory gaps. Thus, it is paramount that issues of equality between women and men and women's human rights are dealt with as cross-sectoral matters, and not as an added item on the development agenda. Most debates on gender equality and empowerment of women within the framework of the sustainable development agenda are confined to gender mainstreaming in institutions, eliminating discriminatory laws, and establishing small-scale programs to empower women's participation at the economic and political levels. Today, it has become necessary to talk about a deep and consistent integration of the gender perspective in the development vision, in a way that assimilates the structural and socio-economic impediments that prevent women from accessing resources in a similar manner to men, and keep them vulnerable to repression and violence.

In the final analysis, it is no longer feasible to ignore the fragmented manner of dealing with this issue in Arab countries, and it is no longer possible to continue ignoring the cultural and socio-cultural roots of discrimination against women. This dimension must be given the priority it deserves on all development and rights agendas of civil society organizations. Furthermore, an effective plan must be set for a genuine transformation in the dominant patriarchal and masculine culture, which is often invoked to cover up the failure to implement governmental (and non-governmental) obligations that realize the rights of all women on the grounds of respect for culture and customs. The cultural and socio-cultural dimension are a primary pathway for working on shifting society away from the patriarchal culture, inherent to and supported by non-democratic regimes, which impedes development in all its dimensions.

10. Exclusionary Development

Current development efforts in the Arab world continue to suffer from the exclusion of many segments

of society from development work, and not only women. It should be noted that the exclusion and marginalization of the youth, persons with disabilities, marginalized and vulnerable groups, and some small or vulnerable population groups (commonly referred to as minorities) constitute a violation of human rights and a hindrance to the development process in the region, which negatively impacts the society as a whole. The 2030 Agenda insisted on leaving no one behind, which means that all categories and individuals have access to the same level of development and well-being. This emphasizes the importance of inclusive development, which stipulates observing the needs and specificities of each category. And since integration is not limited to removing obstacles in the path of the agenda's marginalized groups, it is essential to involve them in planning, decision-making, implementing and monitoring.

III. Recommendations

Based on the discussions and inputs that took place during the regional meeting and through specialized workshops, the organizations participating in the regional meeting reached a set of recommendations that are presented to development partners in general and to policy makers in particular in order to advance the efforts of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs, and to meet the numerous and complex challenges that humans face in the Arab region. The recommendations are divided into general recommendations and substantive recommendations relating to key challenges.

1. General Recommendations

At the Level of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

- Emphasizing that the cultural and political dimensions are key components of the development process and the concept of sustainable human development, in addition to the social, economic and environmental dimensions.
- Adopting a comprehensive, multi-dimensional development approach that addresses the root causes of the region's problems rather than solely tackling their results. The constructive implementation of this approach requires tapping into the resources and capacities of the Arab region. The wealth in culture, heritage, and human capabilities pose an important opportunity for developmental planning.

At the Level of National Strategies

- Implementing national development plans and strategies, and following-up on the work until its execution, as well as identifying priorities and indicators according to the national context, through a participatory and transparent process guided by the ambitious level of the global sustainable development goals and targets, while taking into consideration national circumstances.
- Integrating national plans beyond the sectoral approach, and adopting an integrated approach in national development efforts. This requires working across individual goals and objectives, and seeking existing thematic ties among them, without focusing on some of the goals / sectors and ignoring others.
- Bolstering coordination and cooperation between ministries and within departments, and achieving overall coherence of public policies, as well as within regional bodies.
- Establishing an effective and participatory institutional framework capable of coordinating and holding dialogue with various stakeholders, and is involved in planning, developing strategies, following-up on their implementation, and monitoring progress in the implementation of sustainable development goals.

2. Recommendations Relating to Challenges

On Crises, Wars, and Occupation

- Emphasizing that development work requires a climate of prosperity and peace, which necessitates the cessation of wars and armed conflicts, the achievement of stability, and termination of foreign interventions in the countries of the region, and underscoring the role of the United Nations in carrying out its responsibility to promote and establish peace and security for the communities of the region.
- Including the goal of ending Israeli occupation explicitly among the goals of development partners, and setting a time frame for it.
- Recognizing the right to self-determination of the peoples of the region, and adopting it as a fundamental principle in light of existing conflicts.
- Adopting peaceful approaches for conflict resolution, consolidating the principle of transitional justice, strengthening the rule of law, and supporting a democratic transition for the implementation of development goals, while adopting comprehensive approaches that address the root causes of regional instability that are directly linked to political, economic, and cultural dimensions, which impact the development path.
- Adopting dialogue as a means of conflict resolution, and finding adequate solutions to all parties.

- Calling upon the United Nations and the Arab League to continue their efforts in addressing the issue of displaced persons and refugees via an approach that ensures their rights and dignity and takes into account the specificity of each group, particularly the most marginalized groups, especially women, children and persons with disabilities, since this matter affects political, social, and economic stability.
- Focusing on reconstructing not only the infrastructure, but also communities. Conflict may be an opportunity to truly build a real society and state, and to address a new mechanism to enhance the capacity of states and societies to rise and overcome crises and provide basic life needs. Stressing that reconstruction projects and plans must take into account national priorities away from politicized external interventions, and asserting the participation of the community in implementing reconstruction programs.
- Rephrasing the terminology and concepts used in issues of conflict, disputes, and wars, and taking into consideration the subtleties of their use in describing the cases that regional countries suffer from.

On Trade and Investment Frameworks

- Working on national policies that contribute to the transition from neo-patrimonial and rentier economies to a productive and diversified economy, especially by supporting emerging industries, and adopting a production policy that strengthens national capacities and creates competitive advantages.
- Shifting radically the approach of trade and investment policies away from the unfair trade model and towards strategic openness that is consistent with national economic policies and production priorities.
- Emphasizing the concept of the right to development through the right to control natural resources and the right to choose suitable economic and social growth paths.
- Regaining the political, organizational, and administrative role of the state as a key player in the development process, especially with regards to respecting rights of citizens, protecting them, and obliging investors and capital to abide by necessary standards, laws, and measures.
- Organizing the role of the private sector in the development process, and adopting a binding international mechanism to control its practices based on human rights standards.
- Encouraging collaboration among national partners in development to protect national policy space, which is under pressure from globalization, in order to succeed with national development strategies.
- Setting regional policies that encourage development policies, which support developmental activities and are compatible with the needs, resources, and market of each country, and contribute to the creation of decent and sustainable jobs.
- Contemplating regional production value chains in order to allow labor mobility between countries

according to supply, and enhancing production capacities while reducing competition, and contributing to the expansion of markets and the movement of goods.

- Pressuring and acting on directing the global trading system towards development, and assessing the implications of current and planned economic and social trade agreements.

On Tax Policies

The tax system has four main functions, none of which can be overlooked: redistributing wealth in a just manner among citizens; stimulating economic activity; providing national financial resources for development and the public budget; and building citizenship.

- Applying progressive taxes to address inequities while achieving fair returns, collecting higher percentages from high incomes compared to low incomes, and allocating resources for the benefit of the most disadvantaged segments of society.
- Promoting the principle of tax equity, and balancing between taxes on individuals in the form of income taxes and taxes on purchases on the one hand, and taxes on companies and large investments on the other.
- Eliminating discriminatory tax incentives and tax havens, and curbing tax evasion of transnational corporations and capital flight. Large corporations must be obliged to regularly report their due taxes, as well as their impact on sustainable development and human rights.
- Restructuring the Value Added Tax to ease the burden on the people, and increase the VAT on the consumption of luxuries.
- Increasing public financial transparency at the national level to ensure access to information on tax collection and means of spending revenues. This must be achieved through legislative frameworks that guarantee access to information and enhance citizen awareness and understanding of public finance transparency.

On Social Protection Policies

- Transitioning from the concept of care and targeting to a rights-based concept that assimilates comprehensive social protection. States are legally bound to establish comprehensive social protection systems through a new social contract that recognizes social protection as a human right and one of the most important means of redistribution and wealth. And increasing the percentage of social spending as part of the total government expenditure, and linking reform plans by adopting and implementing a comprehensive and integrated social policy.
- Calling on the international community to adhere to the Social Protection Floor Initiative, which is based on a comprehensive human rights approach, and commitment to adequate financial assistance and

technical support, rather than adopting fragmented approaches to social protection at the national level.

- Adapting social protection floors to respond to the challenges of the region by adding refugees, displaced persons, and migrant workers to the categories that should be covered by the main protection package through appropriate procedures.

On Labor Policies

- Enhancing productive options and developing the industrial and agricultural sectors, which are capable of generating sustainable, decent, and integrated employment opportunities in the framework of a new development model; and, encouraging the adoption of new economic alternatives, such as the solidarity economy, and increasing its contribution to national revenue.

- Applying the decent work standards that the Arab states have committed to, which include guaranteeing the right to work, securing appropriate terms, conditions, and allowances, protecting the right to trade union representation, and enabling trade unions to participate effectively in public policy-making and in the multilateral social dialogue, while emphasizing the need to ensure decent work conditions for migrant workers to and from Arab States.

- Redefining the labor market in general, and redrafting the definition of unemployment based on the labor force, in light of regional conflicts and their effects, such as the surge in asylum seekers, the inflexibility of immigration laws in the region, as well as the high level of unemployment among the youth; a thing that reflects directly on the labor market through the expansion of the informal sector at the expense of formal work, which poses a danger to social protection floors.

- Adopting frameworks, policies, and programs that provide opportunities for empowering marginalized groups, especially persons with disabilities, in order to integrate them into a labor market that is founded on the principle of respect for the individual potential of workers and the productive labor force, while embracing the inevitable role that this segment plays in production processes and economic development.

On Development Cooperation at the National Level

- Restoring the role of the civil society at the national level by providing an enabling environment that offers a set of legal, regulatory and political conditions that affect the capacity and activity of the civil society, as well as involving it in all stages of designing, implementing, following-up, and monitoring policies and programs.

- Involving trade unions and protecting their independence, without rendering them meaningless or neglecting their important role in achieving development; and, involving other grass-root organizations that represent marginalized groups.
- Highlighting the key role of the private sector in

the development process, especially in the fields of investment and production that generate employment, while paying special attention to the risks posed by public-private partnerships due to the weakness of public institutions in Arab countries. These risks may lead to an imbalance in said partnerships for the benefit of the private sector, and jeopardize citizens' right to access public services, due to increased prices of a certain service or its low quality; they may also add huge financial burdens to the public budget.

- Starting a dialogue with social movements and networking with them, as it is pivotal to have a popular base to support development efforts, especially that the work of CSOs targets cities and specific cases that may not be central to the demands of social movements, and trade unions in numerous Arab countries are debilitated to the point where they no longer perform a meaningful role.

On Development Cooperation at the Regional Level

- Confirming the importance of partnership on the national and international levels between all stakeholders (governments, civil society, and private sector), provided that it is an actual partnership and not just a formality. This partnership must be based on institutionalized dialogue among all parties.

- Bolstering the role of institutions and frameworks that sponsor such dialogues, including the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League, at a time when the world is shifting from a global unipolar system to a world system comprised of multiple regional systems, which in turn depends on channeling conditional funding to suit the donor's agenda, without taking into account the specific circumstances of each country in implementing the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

- Preparing an action plan for the implementation of the Decade of Arab Civil Society Organizations (2026-2016), adopted in December 2015, with the participation of concerned experts from Arab CSOs and international and regional experts. The plan aims to expedite the implementation of the activities and programs listed in the Decade of Arab Civil Society Organizations, while stressing the need to involve Arab, regional and international organizations, unions, networks and civil society bodies in these activities, specifically since it was adopted to support Arab civil society organizations working to implement sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

- Establishing a regional mechanism to build consensus over the means of financing at the regional level, and effecting commitments and promises by involving the Arab private sector in place of foreign funding, while emphasizing its commitment to social and environmental responsibility and human rights.

- Emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation in the field of knowledge and technology in a way that reduces costs and increases efficiency and contributes to enhancing the principle of transparency.

On Development Cooperation at the Global Level

- Supporting the capacities of CSOs and enhancing their competence in development work, as per the Istanbul Principles, and supporting them to carry out their role and face challenges.
- Building genuine international partnership founded on equality, respect, social and political integration, and commitment to the rights system and the direction and authority of the global agenda.
- Achieving transparency, democracy, and participation by having developing countries push for access to information, and revising the voting system, including in international financial institutions, which adds to the efficacy of representation and influence of developing countries in the decisions of these institutions.

On Governance

- Adopting comprehensive national integrity systems that guarantee the principles of governance in the legislative, judicial, and executive pillars of the state, and in independent bodies, civil society, media, and the private sector. This stipulates organizing ties between these sectors, and decreeing laws that maintain a comprehensive approach to partnership, accountability, transparency, and disclosure.
- Incorporating the civil society and media in accountability and monitoring by effecting laws that guarantee public freedoms and the right to access information, and protecting informants and witnesses in accordance with international standards. As well as applying governance principles to these sectors.
- Enforcing constitutional provisions on separation of power in a manner that ensures the financial and administrative independence of the judiciary and regulatory bodies. And assuring the integrity of judicial decisions away from political influences. Activating the role of legislative authorities in accountability and follow-up of the reports of regulatory bodies on the performance of the executive authority.
- Adjusting national legislation to international conventions and abiding by enforcing them, especially the international Convention against Corruption.
- Adopting decentralization as a basis for local administration, and granting it the power to implement its plans for development and services according to its independent local needs.
- Adopting transparency in defense budgets.
- Setting guarantees against impunity, while prosecuting corrupt individuals, recovering stolen funds and assets, to be fairly redistributed later, and enforcing laws to combat money-laundering.

On Equality between Women and Men and Empowering Women

- Granting sufficient importance to addressing

the cultural dimension of discrimination against women and the culture of violence and exclusion by confronting the exclusionary patriarchal culture, abolishing the coupling of politics with religion, and limiting extremism, which primarily affects women, and opposing the stereotyping of women in education and media.

- Developing a unified Arab vision that addresses the 2030 Agenda from a gender perspective, in light of the priorities of the Arab region. This includes gender responsive budgeting that adopts social and economic policies that respond to the various or diverging needs of women and men. These policies are important tools that reduce gender inequality.
- Implementing comprehensive social protection systems, and adopting gender budgeting to empower women economically, socially, and educationally. Reducing discrimination in decision-making posts, adopting transparency in recruitment procedures and criteria, and integrating gender equality issues and the empowerment of women in matters of security and natural resources.
- Enacting restraining laws, at the legislative level, that limit violence and harassment, establishing fair legislation for agricultural and domestic work, adopting international conventions and treaties particularly with regard to nationality law, and lifting reservations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

On Achieving Inclusive Development

- Combating the exclusion of youth with all its dangerous repercussions, such as an incline in crime, drug-use, and extremism, which has become the region's malady.
- Reinforcing the right of housing, because this right or the absence of it or the lack of potential to improve its conditions has many social implications, especially on the youth and poor segments.
- Adopting a comprehensive development framework based on the human rights principles listed in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and ensuring the representation of all segments of persons with disabilities in all stages of the development and implementation of national and regional development plans, and implementing legislation that respects international standards and agreements and contributes to the integration of economically and socially disabled persons, and ensuring the application of said legislation.
- Promoting equal opportunity, including the development of fair laws, affirmative action policies, and accessible mechanisms, while taking into account the diverse needs of persons with disabilities, and working on transforming the culture of marginalizing and excluding persons with disabilities, and ensuring available inclusive services for all, including transportation.

- Integrating the needs of persons with disabilities into the public budget and social security, and prioritizing these needs.

On Culture

- Culture is one of the fundamentals of development, and it should be linked to the 2030 Agenda on the basis of science, skills, innovation, values, and behavior, through promoting the values of citizenship, human rights, equality between men and women, and venerating and advancing productive work values that reflect on economic development and overall development, promoting values of sustainability, values of peace and security, and adopting concepts and values that enhance economic and social integration frameworks.
- Reforming education, particularly the integration of the human rights system and sustainability in the curriculum, and altering the concepts that have always contributed to the consolidation of isolation and marginalization.
- Shifting curricula from indoctrination to participation, interaction, research, and innovation.
- Promoting the reform of technical education, and overcoming the artificial separation between academic and vocational education, and acclimating to the needs of the labor market.
- Reforming university education through the establishment of joint research centers at the regional level, promoting and reinforcing innovative thinking tools.

On Natural Resources and Future Generations

- Committing countries to achieving sustainable development goals, without breaching their obligation to protect natural resources for future generations.
- Highlighting the need for countries to acknowledge that preserving the environment and achieving development go hand in hand, and that development cannot be implemented by violating the right for a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment.
- Transforming the economy in a comprehensive manner, and transforming the philosophy of consumerism along with random and unbalanced urban sprawling in order to achieve sustainability.
- Ending non-participatory management of natural resources, especially treaties on swapping vast areas of land, forests and agricultural lands, and halting the threat to the environment. This is at the core of the responsibility and obligations of governments, while protecting these resources from third parties that threaten or harm them.
- Focusing on sustainable development goal number 12, on sustainable consumption and production patterns pertaining to the fair and sustainable management of natural resources, and committing investors and various trade activities to preserving both environment and biodiversity, with the participation of the civil

society and the indigenous people.

- Highlighting the role of concerned national forums in implementing sustainable development by following-up on and monitoring the conservation of the sustainability of natural resources, respecting their regeneration, and preserving the ecological balance in deserts and forests, while urging governments to adopt policies and laws that respect and protect the environment.
- Urging international financial institutions to provide information on projects with regional courtiers that use natural resources, as well as extractive industry projects.
- Creating democratic participatory frameworks for local communities to manage and sustain natural resources.
- Emphasizing the right of the Palestinian people to manage their natural resources, while refraining from recognizing the practices of the occupying authorities in exploiting these resources. And reminding international financial institutions of the need to cease supporting or aiding the occupation, which violates the right of the Palestinian people to enjoy and manage their natural resources.
- Joining the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, with the partnership of the civil society and the private sector.

ANND Position on Financing for Development

Placing Sustainable Development at the Heart of the
Financing Agenda



Placing Sustainable Development at the Heart of the Financing Agenda

This paper sets out ANND's position as regards the Financing for Development (FfD) process in general and the Addis Ababa Conference on financing for development in particular. It highlights the key principles that the conference is expected to be predicated upon and places forward a set of recommendations in areas where it finds that progress is needed.

The UN will finalize the new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the post-2015 development agenda – in September 2015. Yet the question of how the future goals are to be funded remains unanswered. The first FfD conference took place in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002, after which a follow-up conference was organized in Doha, Qatar in 2008. While both FfD conferences provided an insight on the means of financing development, they remained noncommittal on implementation. The third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) is set to take place in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa on 13-16 July. While it is complemented with a handful of international processes happening between now and late September, the conference comes at a critical juncture at which sustainable development is teetering on the brink. Nonetheless, the Addis conference provides an opportunity to place the commitments and principles for sustainable development at the heart of the financing agenda that shall serve in realising the sustainable development goals by 2030.

While a range of global challenges – economic, social, and political – continue to face developing and Arab countries. In particular, these challenges are found in the persistent geographic, factional, and social disparities, in the breakdown of food security and worsening environmental problems, let alone the challenge of unemployment, poverty, social marginalization, the spread of violence and conflict largely driven by decades-long neo-liberal and «structural adjustment» policies. Against this background, a comprehensive vision for the future of the region and the world as a whole is needed in this context. It should be founded on a range of economic, social, humanitarian, and environmental principles within an integrated and

homogeneous framework, based on the principles of human rights and linking between environmental sustainability, integrated economic development, human security, and integrated social development. The search for a more stable and fairer model should be based on the critical assessment of past development experiences and towards the introduction of effective strategies aiming at providing structural flexibility to developing and Arab economies, including the level of economic openness and the degree of trade, investment, and financial integration in global markets. It should as well aim at altering global consumption and production patterns, as well as national and international regulatory frameworks in addition to the enforcement of an effective and fair redistribution strategy, encompassing fair tax systems at national and cross-border levels.

There is more than meets the eye to the Addis Ababa conference on financing for development, and civil society organisations in the Arab region feel compelled to call on the international community and governments to make the Addis Ababa conference a real breakthrough in effective financing for development toward financing people-centred sustainable development. Its outcome should leave no stone unturned if it was to induce an earnest change in the existing state of play. Human rights, fighting poverty and inequality – in all of its fashions and forms – and environmental sustainability must elbow their way into the Addis Ababa conference. Therefore, central to the success of the FfD III Conference is its ability to ensure that the following priorities are met:

Challenges and way forward

It is noted that while the two tracks are independent, both the post-2015 development process and the financing for development process are intrinsically integrated, and any change to the developmental model would be linked to the outcomes of both tracks. For that reason, financing for development would bring about more favourable outcomes when under a new development framework, incorporating more progressive policies in line with international principles of human rights and in under a clear strategy for structural flexibility in developing economies, including the level of economic openness and the degree of integration in global markets through trade, investment, and financial liberalization.

Financing needs in SDGs-relevant sectors are large globally, and developing countries alone face a financing gap that UNCTAD¹ (2014) estimates at US\$2.5 trillion annually. In the Arab region, many

challenges stand in the way of financing development, particularly in non-oil producing countries where fiscal space to finance sustainable development is limited. According to ESCWA's² Arab Sustainable Development Report (2015), the financing gap for the Arab countries is estimated between USD 80 to USD 85 billion per year in 2015 and 2016. While filling the gap is essentially important, it should not be done through business as usual rather through addressing the structural challenges inherent to the current global governance system. It has become clear that quick fix solutions will not guarantee sustainable development in the Arab region nor globally. And in order to finance sustainable development, structural solutions including the creation of more effective, democratic and accountable institutions for managing global finance should be advanced. Arab and developing countries need to evaluate available funding sources – public or private – in terms of their effectiveness, optimal use and impact on sustainable development. This requires that these countries ensure fighting corruption, enhancing their tax regimes and curbing illicit financial flows as well as creating accountable public institutions and instilling governance and rule of law.

• EFFECTIVE FINANCE

The FfD III conference should consider all possible financing sources including private and public as well as domestic and international sources. In the Arab region, many countries have resorted to public domestic debt, thereby crowding out other development options and partners in development. This necessitates that the efficacy of use of public finance, including public debt, be measured. Moreover, the possibility of resorting to other means of finance where future generations would not bear the brunt should be explored.

Globally, official development assistance (ODA) has also been decreasing. Yet, Arab countries are among the countries impacted the most. In this regards, a multi-sided framework for development assistance should be considered where mutually beneficial programs are developed between international donors and Arab countries as well as through Intra-Arab development assistance. In addition, domestic resource mobilisation has a crucial role in development notably through fair taxation, which represents the most sustainable and legitimate form of development finance.

• INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC FINANCE

A necessary but not sufficient step would be for developed countries to finally do their decades-long promise to spend 0.7 per cent of GDP on Official Development Assistance (ODA), which should be complemented with the USD 100 billion per year

that industrialised countries have pledged in climate finance. Effective development plays a critical role in poor countries, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and wherever domestic resource mobilisation is low. It is equally crucial that the international community adopts tangible plans on how they will be realizing commitments. Innovative means of finance, such as the long debated financial transaction tax (FTT) could be introduced by rich countries should they decide on meeting their obligations. Regionally, innovative finance could also play a positive role in financing development in Arab countries. In its recent Innovative sources of financing for development, ESCWA (2015)³ proposes green bonds, Islamic finance assets and green sukuk, which remain largely untapped in the Arab region, as tools with the potential to finance the current funding gap of several Arab countries.

Besides conventional methods such as ODA and other financing tools that remain important, a more comprehensive and integrated approach encompassing different financing options is needed, one that addresses all challenges that hinder the full utilization of all financing sources, including public and private as well as domestic and international resources. Such approach ought to be complemented by regional and international support as well as through a balanced role for both public and private sectors in ensuring a more effective and efficient mobilization of resources.

• DOMESTIC FINANCE

Mobilizing domestic resources through tax reform is critical for attaining sustainable development. Taxation represents a fundamental source of finance, and it is the form that will most likely lead to sustainable development by way of increasing public budgets.

Since undergoing IFI-supported programs a little over two decades now, Arab countries' dominant economic model sought to achieve economic development by dismantling tariffs, reducing corporate tax rates and enacting tax incentives, thereby reducing their ability to collect tax revenues and to provide the most basic public services. Furthermore, Arab countries exhibit a generally low level of tax revenue to GDP, reliance on indirect taxes and VAT, limited progressive taxation and the significance of the informal economy, let alone the absence of taxation on wealth and the alarming rates of illicit financial outflows from MENA. While average tax revenue as a share of GDP represent 35.4 percent in high-income countries, it constitutes 10-17 percent in Arab countries, and 13 and 19.2 percent in low-income and middle-income countries, respectively. By the same token, Global Financial Integrity (GFI) estimated illicit financial outflows from MENA at an alarming 11.2 per cent of total outflows on average in 2011. Therefore, proposals for effective domestic resource mobilisation should include:

■ ¹ http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2014_en.pdf

² <http://css.escwa.org.lb/SDPD/3572/1-Financing.pdf>

³ <http://css.escwa.org.lb/edgd/3607/1500198.pdf>

(i) Generation of enough state revenue through broadening the tax base to include transnational corporations and the rich, who often enjoy preferential tax treatment and incentives. This necessitates strengthening the capacity of national revenue authorities, audit institutions and other oversight bodies.

(ii) Diverse abusive tax practices (tax evasion and avoidance, fraud, illicit financial flows, profit shifting, among others) shall be regarded as human rights violations since they seriously undermine Arab and developing countries' efforts to collect a fair and appropriate share of taxes and negatively impact citizens' rights.

(iii) Progressivity in taxation is important for sustainable development. Besides raising state revenue to fund public investment, it plays a role in countering economic and gender inequality as well as promoting good governance and environmental sustainability⁴.

• PRIVATE FINANCE

Private funds play an important role in development. The largest part of international finance to developing countries is made up of private finance, which in turn relies on foreign direct investment (FDI), portfolio investment, remittances and domestic savings. However, in order to be considered as financing for development, the Addis Ababa conference should clearly highlight the impact and direction of private finance. In the Arab region, FDI in GDP lagged behind the world average in the aftermath of the uprisings and the subsequent unrest paralleling the transition. Thus, such source of private finance alongside private loans and others can have a significant and positive impact in economic recovery. However, it should be channelled to productive sectors of the economy notably industry, agriculture and services, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Nevertheless, the financing for development process should subject private finance to human rights and gender-sensitive safeguards as well as development criteria as ODA and other sources.

It is noted that the world's largest Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) have been calling for a bigger role in financing the SDGs including through moving from billions to trillions in resource flows and investments that are to be channelled through International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and MDBs. Proposals from the aforementioned included calls for having countries improve their institutional and policy environments to attract more private investment and financing, thereby loosening regulations and restrictions to the movement of capital. While MDBs

are constructive partners and private funds play an important role in development, we must be aware of over relying on private finance, notably that coming through International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and MDBs, which is often driven by private rather than public interests. To this end, the Addis Conference should ensure that MDBs and IFIs establish a process to examine the role, scale and functioning of the multilateral and regional development Banks to make them more responsive to the sustainable development agenda including the mobilisation of maximum available resources towards the realization of human rights, poverty and inequality alleviation as well as environmental sustainability. It is also critical that MDBs tailor their mandate and revisit their strategies of engagement (including choice of sectors) towards aligning with national development challenges and needs.

The FfD process should also indicate clearly the function of the private sector vis a vis the state. Along with other stakeholders, the private sector is a vital partner in development particularly through providing investment and equity into productive aspects of the economy. But in order to bring about the optimum outcomes, the FfD process is expected to challenge the human rights exploitations of certain businesses and multinational corporations who operate above the state, and whose practices are detrimental to the attainment of the SDGs. In the respect, the FfD conference should push for expanding upon the UN resolution supporting an international legally binding instrument on businesses that would warrant the application of the universal principles of human rights⁵.

• HYBRID FINANCE

Blended sources include a hybrid of both public and private sources of finance. These include public-private partnerships (PPP). PPPs represent a means of cooperation between the private and public sector in order to finance various public goods and services. But in order for these complex products to fulfil social, economic and cultural rights of citizens there needs to be present the institutional and legislative framework, appropriate financial structures, capacity-building, public acceptance as well as political support. These partnerships should as well be subject to compulsory transparency and accountability safeguards in compliance with human rights norms and standards whereby human rights and access to basic public services come before profit.

• GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

The Busan partnership agreement and the establishment of the Global Partnership for Effectiveness Development Cooperation (GPEDC) have clearly exhibited a shift

⁴ <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/financing-people-centred-sustainable-%20development-january-2015.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

in the global agenda towards aid for sustainable development. And since the Busan partnership of 2011, emphasis has been made on multi-stakeholder engagement in policy-making processes. The state, private sector, communities as well as civil society organisations, unions and academia, among others, all play a role in designing national development priorities and strategies. Yet the FfD process should instil at the heart of the global partnership the concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) as well as mutual accountability, which is enshrined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

In the same way, it will be crucial for developed countries to renew their commitment to the global partnership. Historically, the developed countries have 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 MDGs. Developed countries should consider increasing their contribution of ODA from 0.7 percent of GNI to 1.0 percent.

• OWNERSHIP OF DEVELOPMENT

It is crucial that FfD III places effective and sustainable development at the heart of the financing agenda, which in turn should aim at realizing human rights, creating effective, democratic and accountable global finance institutions as well as addressing the gaping inequalities and accounting for the risk and impacts of climate change.

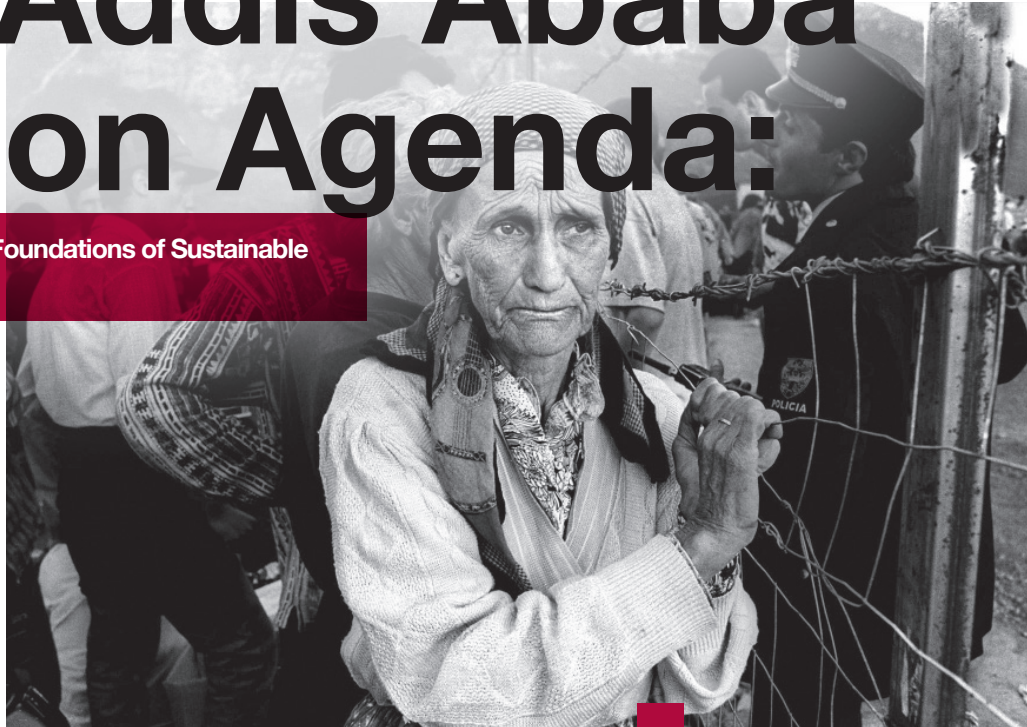
The international community, championed by leaders of the industrialised world, must ensure that the mobilisation of money is aligned with the utmost objective of achieving sustainable development. This entails fully operationalising the model shift towards democratic ownership of development at the national level. Hardly can any sustainable development be achieved short of a global policy space that accounts for each country's national development path and priorities as well as their right to self determination.

• PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Development efforts will inevitable be paralysed under a non-inclusive scheme and without engaging the public in policy-making processes. Public engagement and dialogue are essential for achieving the SDGs. They are also crucial for any transparent and accountable assessment of the impact of various development strategies and policies including the sectors of focus for development. Civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders should be involved in the development process and must be regarded as key partners in policy-making. The relationship between the various stakeholders should be governed by values of shared responsibility, accountability and commitment at the national level.

ANND' Reaction to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda:

A Deviation from the Foundations of Sustainable Development



A Deviation from the Foundations of Sustainable Development

The third International Conference on **Financing for Development (FfD)** took place in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa on 13-16 July, and concluded with an outcome document – dubbed the Addis Ababa Action Agenda – which embodies the international community’s plan to implement and finance the new post-2015 development agenda.

The FfD III conference came at a critical juncture where a range of global challenges – economic, social, and political – continue to face the developing and Arab worlds. In particular, these challenges are found in the persistent geographic, factional, and social disparities, in the breakdown of food security and worsening environmental problems, let alone the challenge of unemployment, poverty, social marginalisation and the spread of violence and conflict largely driven by decades-long neo-liberal and «structural adjustment» policies. Against this background, a comprehensive vision for the future of the region and the world as a whole is needed. It should be founded on a range of economic, social, humanitarian, and environmental principles within an integrated and homogeneous framework, based on the principles of human rights and linking between environmental sustainability, integrated economic development, human security, and integrated social development. The search for a more stable and fairer model should be based on the critical assessment of past development experiences and towards the introduction of effective strategies aiming at providing structural flexibility to developing and Arab economies, including the level of economic openness and the degree of trade, investment, and financial integration in global markets. It should as well aim at altering global consumption and production patterns, as well as national and international regulatory frameworks in addition to the enforcement of an effective and fair redistribution strategy, encompassing fair tax systems at national and cross-border levels.

While the conference outcome may have provided an elaborate plan on the mechanisms of financing the new sustainable development agenda, which is set to be adopted in September in New York, it lacks the spine needed to create real actionable deliverables, let alone its failure to address challenges from a structural level. Against this background, a central question to the appropriateness of the Addis agenda pertains to its ability to cultivate a global economic system that ensures that development finance is people-centred

and protects the environment and builds on the adoption of a comprehensive and integrated approach encompassing different financing options necessary to address all challenges that hinder the full utilization of all financing sources, including public and private as well as domestic and international resources. To this end, the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) is compelled to highlight the following critical issues:

Domestic resource mobilisation: Fair taxation plays a crucial role in development and represents the most sustainable and legitimate form of development finance. Arab countries exhibit a generally low level of tax revenue to GDP, reliance on indirect taxes and VAT, limited progressive taxation and the significance of the informal economy, let alone the absence of taxation on wealth and the alarming rates of illicit financial outflows from MENA. Despite global civil society calls for regional and international support to be drawn in order to promote effective domestic and cross-border resource mobilisation through focusing on the generation of enough state revenue through broadening the tax base on one hand and challenging diverse abusive tax practices (tax evasion and avoidance, fraud, illicit financial flows, profit shifting, among others) on the other, concrete commitments to ensure tax justice and equity remain absent, and the language on progressive tax systems remains weak. In fact, one of the key proposals by G77 countries and global civil society to set up an inclusive intergovernmental, transparent, accountable and adequately resourced global tax body under the auspices of the UN – where developing and developed countries have an equal say in reforming global tax policies and where universal membership could curb illicit financial flows and tackle corporate tax dodging – was rejected, thereby conserving the “rich countries club” clout over global tax affairs.

Private funds and blended sources of finance: Private funds play an important role in development, and the Addis agenda has indeed expressed global support for an array of measures aimed at helping developing countries’ sustainable economic transformation by attracting private finance. Nevertheless, the action agenda has not subjected private finance to human rights as well as gender-sensitive safeguards and development criteria. Furthermore, it fell short of introducing binding commitments necessary to hold businesses accountable against international standards of human, labour as well as environmental rights.

The agenda retains the international community’s earlier stance of aggressively pushing for an increased role of the private sector and blended sources of private finance, including public-private partnerships (PPPs), in funding public services within the FfD agenda. In fact, promoting privatisation and PPPs has nearly become an inextricable UN policy despite concerns regarding human rights impacts. Experience with PPPs in most countries where they have been implemented reveal fundamental failings, including rendering public services unaffordable and concealing public borrowing, while providing long-term state guarantees for profits

to private companies. As long as the agenda fails to recognise the developmental role of the State and its ability to regulate in the public interest, there is a great risk that the private and blended sources of finance undermine rather than contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Democratic ownership of development: Hardly can any sustainable development be achieved short of a global policy that accounts for each country's national development path and priorities, policy and regulatory spaces as well as right to self-determination.

The Addis agenda may in fact be seen as a regression on a number of pertinent issues, including the weakening of commitment to making available the policy and regulatory spaces needed by national governments to regulate their productive and vital sectors in line with their developmental needs. For instance, no critical rights-based and developmental assessment of trade and investment rules has been accounted for in the agenda. By the same token, it fell short of providing the alternatives to commodity-dependence; did not commit to undertaking human rights impact and sustainability assessments of all trade and investment agreements to ensure harmony with the national and extraterritorial obligations of governments; and failed to address the drawbacks of, or eliminate, the investor-state dispute settlement clauses responsible for the shrinking policy and regulatory spaces.

Global Partnership: While the agenda focuses on reinvigorating the global partnership and international development cooperation, no strong commitment is made in terms of transparency and accountability, including concrete commitments from governments and other stakeholders to publish information (timely, comprehensive and accessible) about all development activities and resource flows. In addition, while the agenda does refer to the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR), the language on that remains weak and non-committal.

Public engagement and dialogue are also essential for achieving the SDGs. They are also crucial for any transparent and accountable assessment of the impact of various development strategies and policies including the sectors of focus for development. Civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders have not been effectively accounted for as key partners in policy-making, and public engagement, particularly in global policy-making, has remained symbolic and not governed by values of shared responsibility, accountability and commitment at the national level.





It has become clear that quick fix solutions – which much of the action agenda is based on – will not guarantee sustainable development in the Arab region nor globally. In fact, without advancing structural challenges that would lead to the creation of more effective, democratic and accountable institutions for managing global finance any financing for development agenda would fall short of achieving sustainable development. In this regard, the follow-up process to the Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development should ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of commitments on Means of Implementation for the post-2015 development agenda as well as ensure more international space for discussion and negotiations to improve the current financing for development agenda.



The Arab NGOs Network for Development is an independent, democratic, and civic organization that aims at strengthening civil society and enhancing the values of democracy and respect of Human Rights and sustainable development in the Arab region. It works towards its aim through programs of advocacy and lobbying on regional and national policy-making in three main areas; development, trade, and democracy, while being committed to the international convention on Human Rights, freedom, respect of the individual, respect of diversity, equality of resource division, and the protection of cultural heritage in the Region and the implementing the developmental priorities of the local societies.

P.O.Box: 5792/14 | Mazraa: 1105 – 2070 | Beirut, Lebanon | Tel: +961 1 319366 | Fax: +961 1 815636

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