

9-11 APRIL

BEIRUT, LEBANON



The 2019 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD), the flagship annual regional conference on the [2030 Agenda](#), took place at the UN House under the theme of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality in the Arab region.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, [League of Arab States](#) Secretary-General Ahmad Aboul Gheit, Iraqi Minister of Planning Noori Al-Dulaimi, Chair of the Forum, and ESCWA Executive Secretary Rola Dashti were joined by ministerial-level officials from across the region, diplomats, academics and civil society representatives.



In her opening remarks, Dashti pointed out that the region is enriched with 100 million young people capable of advancing society and transforming our world, if given the opportunity to be more actively involved in the economy and in politics. She also highlighted the recent launch of Young ESCWA, an incubator for innovative solutions to improve the lives of people of the Arab region, including its youth, and to encourage innovation from within.

For his part, Aboul Gheit stressed the need to greatly increase political, economic, social, and environmental cooperation within the Arab region. AFSD-2019 Chair Al-Dulaimi committed to conveying the voice of the region to the global level over the coming months.



DSG Amina Mohammed noted that 2019 is a defining year for the 2030 Agenda, and that the Arab region has a key role to play. She pointed to the advantages of a young population, the importance of shared economic growth, the availability of local financial resources, and the need for improved digital infrastructure in service of innovation. She noted that women now have greater access to leadership positions than ever before like Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon, adding that the world is determined not to leave anyone behind.

She further called for lucidity and resolute action: "we are not on track to deliver on the ambitions we set for ourselves. The data starting to emerge indicate that the world needs a significant step up in action and investment if we are to achieve the SDGs."



Over 3 days, more than 300 high-level representatives of Arab governments, regional intergovernmental organizations, civil society networks and organizations, parliamentarians, academic institutions and UN agencies working in the Arab region came together in a space of dialogue, knowledge exchange and in a spirit of collaboration and dialogue.

The forum reviewed global and regional progress on specific goals, with a focus on inclusion, empowerment and equality as pathways to peace and development; advancing climate action in the Arab region; empowering women and engaging adolescents and youth and scaling up partnerships and regional collaboration.



The AFSD is the primary regional follow-up and review mechanism on the 2030 Agenda. Its findings and recommendations, conveying key messages from the Arab region and its countries, are submitted to the [High-Level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#).

In addition to the HLPF, a UN SDG Summit will be held under the auspices of the UN General Assembly (GA) in September 2019 in New York.

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8 APRIL

BEIRUT, LEBANON

Pathways to Peace: Empowerment, Inclusiveness and Equality

ESCWA, [UNDP](#) and the [Issam Fares Institute](#) at the Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut held an Expert Group Meeting on Empowerment, Inclusiveness and Equality as Pathways to Peace and Sustainable Development in the Arab region.

Participants unpacked the principles of inclusiveness, empowerment and equality, as well as their relation to sustainable development and peacebuilding in conflict settings. Means of operationalizing inclusiveness, empowerment and equality were examined to assess how these principles can mitigate the impact of conflict, build community resilience and promote peace. Attendees reviewed global and regional lessons learned, identifying best practices where strengthened empowerment, inclusiveness, and equality have succeeded in supporting transitions to peace, including the promotion of inclusive societies. Outcomes from this meeting will inform an upcoming study on inclusiveness, empowerment, equality and their relationship with peacebuilding.

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9-10 APRIL

NOUAKCHOTT, MAURITANIA

Mauritania: Open Data, Smart Cities

At the request of the Mauritanian Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and ICTs, ESCWA conducted 2 national workshops on best regional and international practices in open data policy and smart city transformation. ESCWA also proposed a roadmap for an open data policy and ecosystem in Mauritania.

Key messages included the importance of open government policies to foster economic growth, innovation and job creation for youth and entrepreneurs; as well as the importance of IoT applications in creating smart and sustainable cities.

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BEIRUT, LEBANON

International Road Transport of Goods

ESCWA took part in a National Workshop on the Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets ([TIR Convention](#)) and on the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (The Harmonization Convention). The workshop was organized by the EU-funded [EuroMed Transport Support Project](#), in cooperation with the [Ministry of Public Works and Transport of Lebanon](#), the [International Road Transport Union, IRU](#) and the [UNECE](#).

ESCWA presented on border crossing facilitation and the status of the TIR and harmonization agreements in the ESCWA region, highlighting the need for a regional common vision and strategy in transport and logistics. Such a shared roadmap will help the region deliver the 2030 Agenda and maximize benefits from the mega transportation projects to be completed under the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.