

## **Expert Group Meeting - “From plan to implementation for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: Budgeting in support of effective institutions”**

**On 7 and 8 May 2019<sup>1</sup> at UNESCWA (Committee Room 1) in Beirut, Lebanon**

### **Context and objectives of the meeting**

Under its regular work programme the Economic Governance and Planning Section at UNESCWA/EDID undertakes a series of initiatives addressing the topic of “Economic Governance and National Development Planning in the Arab Region” which aims to support UNESCWA’s Member Countries in their efforts towards integrated national development planning and ultimately the achievement of the SDGs.

There has been substantial debate at global, regional and national levels on how budget processes can support national institutions to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through their relations to the institutional principles highlighted in SDG 16, including effectiveness, accountability, transparency, anti-corruption, access to information, inclusive decision-making and non-discrimination. To formulate lessons learned on effective budgeting for national development planning and in support of implementing Agenda 2030 as well as to carve out ideas for addressing development planning related to budget planning specific to the Arab region, the expert group meeting brings together a range of international experts and stakeholders.

The primary objectives of the meeting are:

- To serve as a complement and follow-up to the first regional meeting of project focal points in September 2018 during which participants identified problems with budget formulation and allocation as a main concern for effective implementation of national development plans;
- To review international expertise and knowledge in terms of (i) the main (recent) current of thoughts and initiatives going on in relation to the principle in question in terms of planning and budgeting; (ii) known results/ evaluations of various institutional approaches; and (iii) challenges, limitations and possible developments at the global level;
- To draw out lessons learned and specific guidance/recommendations for policy-makers in the Arab region by consolidating the discussion after the meeting into a summary paper on key lessons learned for budgeting and planning in support of effective institutions that serves as regionally-tailored addition to the World Public Sector Report 2019.

### **Format of the meeting**

The number of participants will be limited to have opportunity for in-depth discussion and participants are encouraged to share their contributions prior to the meeting.

For additional information or questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

Ms Denise Sumpf  
Chief (a.i), Economic Governance and Planning Section,  
Economic Development and Integration Division  
Tel: +961-1-978423, Fax: +961-1-978975, E-Mail: [sumpf@un.org](mailto:sumpf@un.org)  
UNITED NATIONS – ESCWA, P.O. Box 11-8575, Riad el-Solh, Beirut – Lebanon

---

<sup>1</sup> Mindful of Ramadan the workshop timings can be adjusted to the participants’ needs.

## Day 1

09:00	-	09:30	<b>Arrival and registration</b>
09:30	-	10:45	<b>Welcome &amp; Opening Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Mohamed El-Hacene, Director, EDID, UNESCWA</li> </ul> <b>Keynote speech - “Institutional layers of economic governance and their influence on geographies of economic development” (via WebEx)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Martin Jones, Professor of Human Geography and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Staffordshire University, UK</li> </ul>
10:45	-	11:00	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:00	-	12:30	<b>Session 1: Institutions for the sustainable development goals - Empirical views from the World Public Sector Report 2018 &amp; 2019</b> <p>The session will present a substantive preview on the analysis included in the 2019 WSPR report, thus giving an international perspective on national budget processes and the SDGs.</p> <p>Bearing relevance for Arab countries and drawing on lessons also learned in the context of the MDGs, the discussion covers a review of typology of approaches, necessary national actions to link SDGs and budgets so far in the international context as well as drivers of SDG integration into budget processes.</p> <p><i>Speaker:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>David LeBlanc, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UNDESA</li> </ul>
12:30	-	14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
14:00	-	15:30	<b>Session 2: Budgeting processes - Case studies from the Arab region</b> <p>The session summarizes ongoing experiences in Arab countries with respect to effective budget processes. For example, in Egypt, attention is drawn to undertake important initiatives to address: a lack of transparency, limited citizen inclusion in the budget-making process; and problematic energy subsidies, which accounted for a third of all government expenditures. The discussion of further experiences from Algeria and Jordan will help the identification of Arab strategies towards budget formulation and of gaps in comparison to international best practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ahmed Abdelwahab Ahmed, Head of Economic Unit, Egyptian Center for Public Policy Studies</li> <li>Mohammed Zine Barka, Professeur de Sciences Economiques/Directeur de la Revue Algérienne de Finances Publique/Directeur du Groupe de Recherche en Economie des Finances Publiques – GREFIP, Université de Tlemcen</li> <li>Mohamad Masadeh, Chairman, Partners – Jordan</li> </ul>
15:45	-	16:30	<b>Session 3: Budgeting, budget credibility and accountability</b> <p>To inform national development planning efforts in the Arab region in terms of improving transparency, accountability and participation, this session discusses the importance of the quality of reasoning in government budget documents. The quality and depth of reasoning links to the ability of understanding by public policy by stakeholders and supports clarity on linkages as well as cross-sectoral contributions. Focusing the context of Arab countries, the session discusses the assessment criteria for judging both retrospective and prospective reasons</p>

governments give for budget choices and deviations in public budget documents.

*Speaker:*

- Guillermo Herrera, Project Coordinator 'Assessing Budget Credibility Project', International Budget Partnership (via WebEx)

---

## Day 2

---

09:00 - 09:45

### **Session 4: Overview on domestic public resources in the Arab region**

Presentation on the recent trends in domestic public resources in the Arab countries. Increasing domestic revenue mobilization by all possible means is a priority for most countries in the region as well as more efficient fiscal expenditures to promote the target of economic diversification and increase revenue mobilization in a long-term perspective. The session discusses some policy proposals, with a focus on raising domestic revenue mobilisation in the Arab region.

*Speaker:*

- Niranjan Saranji, UNESCWA

09:45 - 10:00

### **Coffee Break**

10:00 - 11:30

### **Session 5: Risk management for effective budgeting in Arab national development planning**

Linked to the previous sessions, this part of the meeting explores how transparency policies and oversight in various areas contribute to more effective planning, budgeting and implementation processes; how corruption risks affect the different stages of the planning and budget process, and how associated issues can be addressed (ie. good examples of practices and tools at the systemic and sector levels); and how budget and planning processes can be structured to promote non-discrimination and inclusiveness. The discussion will also consider (1) the role of the private sector and (2) the situation in Lebanon, where hydrocarbon revenues are expected to soon contribute to the national budget.

*Speakers:*

- Oktavianto Pasaribu, Chief, Regional Programming Unit, ILO
- Diana Kaissy, Executive Director, Lebanon Oil and Gas Initiative
- Alissa Amico, Managing Director, GOVERN
- Xavier Rame, Public Financial Management Advisor, IMF METAC

11:30 - 12:30

### **Session 6: Effective budgeting for national development planning in the Arab region:**

*This component is an open platform for discussion to summarise based key concerns, lessons learned, best practices, etc. from the previous sessions and to draw out implications for the Arab region as well as ideas for problem-solving.*

12:30 - 14:00

### **Lunch**

14:00 - 15:00

### **Session 6 (cont'd): Effective budgeting for national development planning in the Arab region**

15:00 - 15:30

### **Conclusions & Closing**

Mohamed El-Hacene, Director, EDID, UNESCWA

---

\*\*\*\*\*