ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

**of the Twenty-Third Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism
UN-House, Beirut, Lebanon, 20-21 November 2017**

CONTENTS

Introduction

1.   The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), acting as the secretariat of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), convened the twenty-third RCM meeting on 20-21 November 2017 at UN-House, Beirut, Lebanon which was held back-to-back with the Regional United Nations Development Group (R-UNDG) Meeting on the 21st of November.

2.   Representatives of United Nations agencies, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the World Bank attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to: (a) discuss entry points for an integrated, cross-sectoral approach to development planning (b) review the implications of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) on regional level work and programmes; (c) review the proposal for a revised Food Security and Nutrition Working Group; (d) Review the proposal for a new Working Group on Water and (e) convene the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on the 2030 Agenda (2030 Agenda WG).

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.   The recommendations of the twenty-third RCM meeting were as follows:

(a) The RCM Secretariat and LAS should establish a joint working group to prepare for the UN-LAS Coordination meeting and discuss the Matrix of Collaboration to streamline and make it more strategic, with an emphasis on prioritizing activities and focusing on new areas;

(b) Approve the establishment of the Working Group on Water and its Terms of Reference;

(c) Approve the reformulated Terms of Reference and scope of the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group;

(d) Endorse the Work Plan of the International Migration Working Group;

(e) The 2030 Agenda WG should develop a regional analysis of SDG integration and explore the possibility of assisting selected countries with country-specific analysis of such integration;

(f) The RCM recognizes the importance of people-centered SDGs and in this context, approves linking the regional taskforce on ICPD-based SDG indicators co-convened by UNFPA, ESCWA and LAS to the RCM mechanism;

(g) The RCM should explore the possibility of jointly engaging with the private sector to identify areas of potential collaboration, as well as with the International Science Council on adapting and implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region to bridge the gap between the UN and academia;

(h) The regional UN Development System (UNDS) should maintain the RCM as an inter-agency platform that includes regional organisations such as LAS;

(i) ESCWA should continue to facilitate inter-agency dialogue on change management at the regional level in light of the UNDS Reform, including issues such as regional programming, co-location and pooling of resources. To this end, ESCWA suggested a meeting of RCM members at the end of February 2018 to discuss the contents of the UN Secretary-General's report to ECOSOC in early February 2018;

(j) The regional UNDS should assign a single unified regional data platform. It was suggested that ESCWA take this role;

(k) The Country Support Taskforce should look at what existing country-level taskforces are doing and report back to the RCM;

(l) The Joint Working Group on the 2030 Agenda (2030 Agenda WG) Secretariat should undertake a stock-taking exercise and set up a repository of all the work of the Working Group and Taskforces, accessible by everyone; and

(m) The 2030 Agenda WG should share with ESCWA events and teleconferences and ESCWA to update the calendar of events accordingly.

II. OPENING REMARKS

4.   Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Executive Secretary of ESCWA welcomed Mr. Ahmad Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS), Mr. Mourad Wahba, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, Assistant Administrator of UNDP and Chair of the Regional UN Development Group for Arab States, UN Regional Directors and members of LAS to the 23rd RCM meeting. He raised the following key points in his opening remarks:

- Mr. Alhakim remembered Dr. Mahmoud Fikri, Regional Director of WHO, who passed away recently and extended his condolences to Dr. Fikri's family, friends and colleagues.

- He confirmed that the 23rd RCM meeting comes at a time when Arab countries are facing complex and pressing domestic challenges—such as peace and security, unemployment and environmental stability—as well as transboundary regional challenges—such as water and international migration. He acknowledged that these challenges can, but should not, affect the UN's ability to act as "one" to ensure that the basic human rights of citizens are protected, which should be a priority for all countries in the region.

- He noted there is consensus that the siloed, sectoral approach adopted for the MDGs will not achieve sustainable development and confirmed that a more holistic approach is required to address the integrated and cross-cutting nature of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated and interlinked targets. He acknowledged that unfortunately there is an insufficient understanding and accounting of trade-offs and synergies across sectors which has resulted at times in incoherence, adverse impacts of development policies in one sector on another, and ultimately in diverging outcomes and trends.

- To address these challenges, Mr. Alhakim indicated that there is a need to look at concrete ways to operationalise the integrated approach to the SDGs at both the national and regional levels. He confirmed that a common understanding of what this means would greatly assist countries in the Arab region in adapting and implementing the 2030 Agenda. He expressed the need to identify the transboundary dimensions of the SDGs which he said can only be addressed through regional cooperation and interventions.

- Mr. Alhakim discussed the UN Secretary-General's Reform Agenda where he highlighted the Secretary-General's findings and recommendations on the UNDS's regional functions, policy and data management capacities; his call for a clearer division of roles and responsibilities of UN entities at regional and sub-regional levels, as well as his call for a united policy voice to meet the critical demands of the 2030 Agenda.

5.   Mr. Ahmad Aboul Gheit, in his opening remarks agreed with Mr. Alhakim that these are challenging times. He raised the following key points in his opening remarks:

- Mr. Aboul Gheit noted that the Arab World is at a crossroads between promises and threats, promises of welfare and progress and threats of war and terrorism.

- He remarked there are forces pulling the Arab region backwards, which are obstructing the path to development and are sabotaging reconstruction efforts. However, he also suggested there are forces that are firmly promoting change and adopting a reform agenda that stems from the development of societies and people. He commended the governments that are boldly, confidently and steadfastly on the path of reform.

- He noted that development is a long-term project, and that sustaining development and maintaining it is harder than launching it.

6.   Mr. Mourad Wahba, in his opening remarks raised the following key points:

- He acknowledged that the only way for the UNDS to contribute to the region's progress is to reform the system and work more effectively and efficiently together.

- Mr. Wahba referred to the UN Secretary General's Report and noted that the integrated and ambitious nature of the SDGs requires bold changes, the laying out a roadmap to increase the system's effectiveness, cohesion, leadership and accountability. He confirmed that the message from member States is clear, that this is a great opportunity for everyone.

- He noted that by working together, success is more likely and he referred to the ESCWA-led Arab Fora on Sustainable Development as an example of a collaborative initiative.

- Mr. Wahba also referred to the 2030 Agenda WG, led by ESCWA and Co-Chaired by the R-UNDG and confirmed that the Working Group will look to see how it can help member States and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

III. PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. SESSION 1 – HARMONISING UN AND LAS EFFORTS

7.   The objectives of the Session were to (a) identify ways in which the mandates of UN and LAS complement each other and how they can build on their respective comparative advantage; (b) ensure strategic and coordinated support to LAS by UN agencies in priority areas, including an examination of the UN-LAS matrix; and (c) ensure improved 2030 Agenda coordination, particularly in relation to the Arab Week and the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, to enhance synergy and avoid duplication.

8.   The moderator for the Session was Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director of UN Women and the speaker was Ambassador Hossam Zaki, Assistant Secretary-General and Chef de Cabinet, LAS.

9.   Some of the key points of the discussion were as follows:

9.1 Cooperation with the UN is an issue of utmost importance to LAS. The UN and LAS are close and strategic partners and need to support each other in achieving mutual goals. UN agencies present echoed the sentiments of UNICEF who confirmed that LAS is a key partner in the region.

9.2 LAS invited ESCWA to host the next RCM at LAS Headquarters in Cairo, Egypt and invited relevant UN Agencies to participate in the LAS High-Level Committee on Sustainable Development, Sectoral Committees, and International Organizations.

9.3 Participants agreed on the importance of streamlining the UN-LAS Matrix of Collaboration to ensure it is strategic and that the progress of implementation can be monitored. It was suggested by OHCHR that this issue is raised at the next UN-LAS Coordination meeting and that streamlining may be based on the LAS framework of priorities identified by the Arab ECOSOC.

9.4 Ensuring greater harmonization between the activities of UN Agencies and LAS in support of member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9.5 UNDP referred to cooperation between various regional bodies and suggested it was important for these bodies to connect at both the global and country level to relay regional norms and policies from Headquarters, with country teams also relaying concerns and priorities to Headquarters.

10. The key recommendation from the session was the agreement to establish a joint working group to prepare for the UN-LAS Coordination meeting and discuss the Matrix of Collaboration to streamline it and make it more strategic, with an emphasis on prioritizing activities and focusing on new areas.

B. SESSION 2 – RCM WORKING GROUP UPDATES

11. The objectives of the Session were to review the: (a) the status and updates of the International Migration Working Group; (b) the proposal for the revised Food Security and Nutrition Working Group; and (c) the proposal for the new Working Group on Water.

12. The moderator of the Session was Mr. Muhannad Hadi, WFP Regional Director. The speakers for the various working groups were as follows: International Migration: Ms. Kristina Mejo, IOM Regional Liaison and Policy Officer: Mr. Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, FAO Regional Director; The Working Group on Water: Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director of Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA.

13. Some of the key points of the discussion were as follows:

13.1 Membership of the International Migration Working Group: IOM confirmed that UNICEF had requested to join the Working Group. Planned activities for 2018 include the launching of the 2018 Situation Report, commencing preparations for the 2019 Situation Report as well as capacity building for senior government officials on migration trends.

13.2 ESCWA noted that no single agency can cover all aspects of water on its own and that an inter-sectoral approach is required. UNICEF and UNFPA supported the establishment of the Working Group on Water.

13.3 FAO suggested that the Food Security Working Group change its name to the Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition and that the revised Working Group would start by identifying the main areas of intervention for the region.

13.4 Ms. Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive-Secretary of ESCWA confirmed that the three working groups are essential to peace and security in the region, noting that unresolved challenges around food, water and migration destabilize the region.

13.5   It was noted by both UNESCO and ESCWA that sectoral working groups should also cover cross-sectoral issues and suggested that all RCM working groups should be linked to the 2030 Agenda WG.

13.6   It was confirmed by UN Habitat and UNDP that there is a need to consider how the RCM working groups link with the R-UNDG working groups.

14.   The key recommendations from the session were to:

14.1   Approve the establishment of the Working Group on Water and its Terms of Reference.

14.2   Approve the reformulated Terms of Reference and scope of the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group.

14.3   Endorse the Work Plan of the International Migration Working Group.

14.4   The RCM recognized the importance of people-centered SDGs and in this context approved linking the regional taskforce on ICPD-based SDG indicators co-convened by UNFPA, ESCWA and LAS to the RCM mechanism.

C: SESSION 3 – ENTRY POINTS FOR AN INTEGRATED, CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

15.   The objectives of the Session were to (a) jointly identify key issues and concrete initiatives, including shared and transboundary dimensions, for operationalising an integrated approach to the SDGs in the Arab States, which will be used as part of the discussion in Session VI (meeting of the Joint Working Group on the 2030 Agenda); and (b) identify possible entry points for capturing the integrated nature of the SDGs through national and regional Follow-Up and Review.

16.   The moderator of the Session was Mr. Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director. A keynote address was given by Professor David Griggs, Professor of Sustainable Development at Monash University, Australia and Warwick University in the United Kingdom. Mr. Muhannad Hadi and Ms. Maisaa Youssef, ESCWA Sustainable Development Officer gave short discussant interventions on the issues which need to be addressed to enable an integrated approach to implementation of the SDGs.

17.   Professor David Griggs raised the following key points in his presentation:

17.1   He noted that SDG interactions are often ignored for three reasons: everything is siloed, systems are set up to be competitive and there is a cost, both monetary and of time and effort to studying these interactions and implementing policies which recognise these interactions.

17.2   Professor Griggs suggested that a full systems analysis would need to be carried out to identify all the interactions. He acknowledged that this could be overly complicated and suggested a simpler approach, involving a scoring system from -3 to +3 to identify strengths and interlinkages between goals and associated targets.

17.3   He noted that negative interactions between goals can be the result of poor governance and used the example of countries meeting their energy needs. He said that this can be achieved by burning fossil fuels, with the resultant negative effects on the environment, or alternatively investing in renewable energy with the positive effect on the environment, while also creating new employment opportunities.

17.4   To implement the SDGs, Professor Griggs suggested that there needs to be engagement with multiple stakeholders rather than only governments and he referred specifically to the private

sector. He emphasised that taking an integrated approach to implementation gives better economic and social results than individual sectoral approaches.

17.5   He noted that different countries will have different national contexts and priorities, and that it is acceptable to prioritise across and within the SDGs to reflect a particular national context, but that it is unacceptable to prioritise because a certain route is easier or ignore the fact that a certain route may have negative effects on other SDGs.

17.6   Professor Griggs confirmed that there needs to be a move away from a rules-based approach to implementation, which focuses on prohibitions and requirements to a goals-based approach, where the focus is on concentrating human and material resources in a campaign to achieve specific objectives within a specific period.

17.7   He also confirmed that UN Agencies are well placed to understand what needs can be addressed at the national and regional level to increase the impetus of SDG implementation.

18.   Ms. Youssef, in her intervention, raised the following key points:

18.1   She acknowledged the toll that conflicts are taking on the region and suggested that in order to move to an integrated approach, it is important to consider the broader context of the region, where there is an absence of democracy and a human rights culture, as well as a lack of representative institutions.

18.2   Ms. Youssef referenced youth, who, she noted are often said to be drivers for the SDGs in the region. She noted that educational systems, which are themselves institutions, tend to curb critical thinking, a requirement for finding the creative solutions to the issues affecting the region, including the need for peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal 16).

18.3   Ms. Youssef suggested that education reform could be an entry point for an integrated approach to development programming.

18.4   She also suggested that there needs to be a process put in place to tackle the human rights culture in the region as well as accountable institutions which address the root causes of conflict and war.

19.   Mr. Hadi, in his intervention, raised the following key points:

19.1   There is potential for partnership between the UN and academia to assist with processing the large about data in the region.

19.2   Mr. Hadi, agreed with Ms. Youssef that there is an underlying human rights problem in the region, which needs to be addressed.

19.3   He queried whether it was possible to start addressing world hunger while conflict in all its forms is so prevalent across the region.

19.4   Mr. Hadi suggested that marginalization and extremism can only be addressed through education.

19.5   He highlighted the importance of women in the region and referred to the gender gap, which he indicated was not being adequately addressed.

20.   Some of the key points of the discussion were as follows:

20.1   The 2030 Agenda is fundamentally aimed at improving the lives of people. UNFPA and ESCWA both stressed that the 2030 Agenda needs to be approached holistically, including all elements in the preamble.

20.2 The 2030 Agenda is nationally-owned, and the starting point of the UN should be to assist governments implement the Agenda and ensure they are able to bring on board key stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector. In this regard, UN Women and WHO agreed with the need to engage with multiple stakeholders, especially the private sector to speed up the process of SDG implementation and UNHCR acknowledged that, as access to bilateral and international financing becomes more difficult, there is an increase in the need for partnerships with the private sector.

20.3 ESCWA and WHO reiterated Professor Griggs' assertion that prioritizing SDG implementation is welcome and often necessary, but this must be done with the right intentions and in the right way – not at the expense of other SDGs and not by choosing only goals that are easy to achieve and create a positive image.

20.4 UNEP, who were unable to attend the RCM meeting submitted a paper on *Integrating the Environment in to the 2030 Agenda*. Ms. Roula Majdalani provided a summary of the paper, the key points of which were as follows:

20.4.1 Now is the time for prioritizing some goals over others.

20.4.2 More than half of the 17 SDGs have an environmental focus or address the sustainability of natural resources, and over half of the 169 targets incorporate an environmental dimension.

20.4.3 The environmental dimension fits well with a nexus approach as nexus integration's guiding principles are to promote sustainable and efficient resource use to ensure access to resources for the most vulnerable, especially the poor, and to maintain healthy and productive ecosystems.

20.5 The UN must consider the interlinkages between the SDGs when acting. Failure to do so would result in missing out on possible synergies.

20.6 The process of identifying interlinkages may be more important than the outcome itself, consequently, as ESCWA noted, it is not necessary to insist on maximal scientific rigour.

20.7 ESCWA also noted that shifting to an integrated approach which considers root causes and context may reveal that, as Ms. Youssef suggested, the underlying challenges in the region are not only war and conflict, but also the absence of democracy and a human rights culture, as well as a lack of representative institutions and unequal distribution of wealth.

20.8 The UN must give more emphasis to leveraging the means needed to realize the 2030 Agenda and UNFPA noted that UN agencies are often not seen as partners but as potential sources of resources and governments often send the same requests to multiple UN agencies.

20.9 Both WFP and OHCHR agreed with Ms. Youssef's assertion that the issue of human rights needs to be addressed to find solutions to regional issues.

20.10 UNHCR referred to the issue of displaced populations and called for organisation working in development to acknowledge that this issue has moved into the development space and can no longer be considered solely a humanitarian problem.

21. The key recommendation from the session were:

21.1 The 2030 Agenda WG should develop a regional analysis of SDG integration and explore the possibility of assisting selected countries with country-specific analysis of such integration.

21.2 The RCM should explore the possibility of jointly engaging with the private sector to identify areas of potential collaboration, as well as with the International Science Council on adapting and implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region to bridge the gap between the UN and academia.

SESSSION IV: REVIEW THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE QCPR ON REGIONAL LEVEL WORK AND PROGRAMMES

22.   The objectives of the session were to: (a) explore the challenges outlined in the UN Secretary-Generals proposed reforms, in particular: (i) the need for better coordination and cooperation, including the production of knowledge products; (ii) the need for clearer division of roles and responsibilities of UN entities at regional and sub-regional levels, as well as between Regional Commissions, DESA and UN operational entities, with the possibility of co-locating or pooling resources; and (iii) the need for a united policy voice at the regional level to meet the critical demands of the new agenda, including the area of financing for development; (b) explore the practical implication of the UN Secretary-General's recommendations, in relation to a strengthened interface between Regional Commissions and UNCTs to enhance effective programme delivery and policy coherence; and (c) Review the existing UN regional coordination structures, in particular the linkages between the RCM and the R-UNDG.

23.   Mr. Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director moderated the session. Mr. Martii Antola, Resource Mobilisation Officer, Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section (StEPS), ESCWA gave a short presentation on reviewing the implications of the QCPR on regional level work and programmes.

24.   Mr. Antola raised the following key points in his presentation:

24.1   He noted that the aim of the QCPR was to work better together across the United Nations system and with a greater emphasis on prevention to address the root causes of instability, vulnerability, exclusion and conflict.

24.2   Mr. Antola confirmed that the UN Secretary-General's June Report focused on: (i) the functions and capacities needed to deliver on the 2030 Agenda; (ii) delivering coherently through strengthened and accountable leadership and (iii) strengthening accountability for UNDS support to the 2030 Agenda.

24.3   He pointed out that the Secretary-General's Report called for a review of the UNDS functions at the regional level which involved: (i) clarifying the division of labour between RECs, DESA and UN operational entities at the regional level (ii) exploring the possibilities for co-location or pooling of system-wide policy capacities; and (iii) reviewing existing coordination structures.

24.4   Mr. Antola confirmed that the objectives of the proposed reform included: (i) a more sophisticated policy integration skills and cohesive policy voice on issues like trade-offs and prioritization of SDGs; (ii) a clearer definition of regional approaches to cross-border challenges and regional priorities; (iii) co-location or pooling of system-wide expertise across the UNDS; and (iv) limit overlaps through adequate division of labour and collaborative approaches as well as harmonise data and reporting systems across agencies, cutting across the peace, development and human rights pillars.

25.   Some of the key points of the discussion were as follows:

25.1   UNDP and UNICEF referred to the need for reform.

25.2   There was broad agreement that reform requires cultural as well as structural change. UNDP referred to the lack of collective planning and that different accountability and reporting lines are hindrances to effective collaboration. ISDR commented on the need for joint work programming. ILO noted that each UN agency has its own strengths and a way should be found to use these individual strengths collectively. UNDP indicated that the UNDS must find incentives for organisations to work together and FAO suggested that there was a need to look at the substance of what is being done at the regional level and that the culture within the UNDS may be the greatest challenge to meaningful change.

25.3   ILO suggested that regardless of the outcome of the UNDS Reform, it will be necessary to look at the existing regional management system to see what changes, if any, are required and UNESCO referred to the need for a change management system.

25.4   IOM and UNV noted the relevance of the humanitarian/development/peace nexus to the challenges faced in the region and IOM suggested that the regional UNDS needs to explore new ways of working to ensure it can deliver as a system based on these interlinked challenges, while leaving space for humanitarian action. IOM referred specifically to the reporting and funding mechanisms which, depending on whether the action is deemed humanitarian or development, sometimes contradict each other.

25.5   UNDP indicated that if country level interventions are successful, it may be easier to ensure regional successes, while WHO referred to the importance of communicating with a common voice to member States;

25.6   UNOCHA referred to the importance of the private sector and civil society and that it is the responsibility of the UN to take the lead and highlight how these sectors can make a meaningful contribution to development.

25.7   UNDP and ILO referred to the need to map and analyse specific overlaps in work programmes and available resources in the region to determine the best model for co-locating and pooling technical and human resources and UNDP indicated that the pooling of funds was key to the ensuring reform is a success at the regional and country level.

25.8   ESCWA suggested that UN agencies should adopt an incremental approach to joint programming, learning from pilot initiatives. UNAIDS and UNDP suggested that such an approach would need to be accompanied by a robust accountability framework for measuring success and progress.

25.9   UNDP and ILO referred to the need for harmonization on data and UNDP suggested there be one agency which is the custodian of data, possibly ESCWA.

25.10   To be relevant to the region, UN Women suggested that the UNDS should ensure the quality of its policy advice, for example by seeking peer review and other quality assurance checks for its knowledge products and advisory services.

25.11   UNDP referred to the cross-border nature of problems affecting the region and noted the importance of LAS in this regard. LAS expressed the need for regional inter-agency platforms, such as the RCM.

26.   The key recommendations for the Session were as follows:

26.1   The regional UNDS should maintain the RCM as an inter-agency platform that includes regional organisations such as LAS.

26.2   ESCWA should continue to facilitate inter-agency dialogue on change management at the regional level in light of the UNDS Reform, including issues such as regional programming, co-location and pooling of resources. To this end, ESCWA suggested a meeting of RCM members at the end of February 2018 to discuss the contents of the Secretary-General's report to ECOSOC early in February 2018.

26.3   The regional UNDS should assign a single unified regional data platform. It was suggested that ESCWA take this role.

SESSION V: WRAP UP OF DAY ONE

27.   The objective of the Session was to determine concrete recommendations from day one of the RCM meeting.

28.   The moderator of this Session was Ms. Khawla Mattar.

29.   Ms. Mattar opened the session by reading a statement from Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed on reforming the UNDS which was shared with the RCM.

30.   The key points from the statement were as follows:

30.1   Ms. Mohammed noted that the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents both challenges and opportunities for the UNDS which needs repositioning to ensure it is capable, relevant and cohesive to support Member States in their efforts to realise the SDGs.

30.2   She acknowledged that through the QCPR, Member States called for a UNDS that is more strategic, accountable, transparent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-orientated.

30.3   Ms. Mohammed, in her statement confirmed that the direction which needs to be taken to recalibrate the system at the regional level is clear: existing arrangements must be optimized, there needs to be a move to a system that is well-coordinated at all levels and where entities recognize and draw on one another's strengths and there needs to be a rationalization of how the current RCM Working Groups and Taskforces work in light of the 2030 Agenda and UNDS reforms.

30.4   She acknowledged partnerships are key to operationalising the ambitions set out in the 2030 Agenda and specifically referred to the importance of having LAS as members of the RCM, as well as having the RCM open to regional and international financial institutions.

30.5   Ms. Mohammed noted that this approach to strategically engage with regional actors to enhance coordination will be key to scaling up, accelerating and financing the 2030 Agenda.

SESSION VI: MEETING OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP ON THE 2030 AGENDA

31.   The objectives of the Session were to: (i) convene the first meeting of the 2030 Agenda WG; (ii) examine initiatives and concrete ideas for integration identified in the first session of Day One of the RCM meeting; and (iii) review progress reports and plans of the Working Group and Taskforces.

32.   The co-moderators of the Session were Ms. Khawla Mattar and Mr. Mourad Wahba. Ms. Ramla Khalidi, Section Chief, StEPS, ESCWA gave a short presentation on the 2030 Agenda WG and the speakers for the various taskforces were as follows: The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) Taskforce: Ms. Karima El-Korri, Section Chief, 2030 Agenda Unit, ESCWA; Country Support Taskforce: Mr. Adel Abdellatif, Chief of the Regional Programming Division, UNDP; SDG Data Taskforce: Mr. Juraj Riecan, Director, Statistics Division, ESCWA; and the Arab Sustainable Development Report (ASDR) Taskforce: Ms. Karima El Korri.

33.   Ms. Khalidi, in her presentation on the 2030 Agenda WG raised the following key points:

33.1   She identified three reasons for setting up the joint 2030 Agenda WG: (i) the 2030 Agenda is a priority for all RCM and R-UNDG meeting; (ii) the 2030 Agenda WG is being set up in line with the Statement of Collaboration between the Regional Commissions and UNDG, and in the spirit of the UN Secretary-General's recommendations for a strengthened UNDS at the regional level; and (iii) the 2030 Agenda WG recognizes the strengths and mandates of various UN entities and should ensure greater coordination between UN entities.

33.2   Ms. Khalidi presented the structure of the 2030 Agenda WG, which will be Co-Chaired by ESCWA and the R-UNDG. She noted that the four taskforces will report to the 2030 Agenda WG.

33.3   Ms. Khalidi detailed the scope of the 2030 Agenda WG which is: (i) to ensure coherence, coordination, and avoid duplication in the areas of regional consultations, knowledge production, follow-up and review, monitoring and data, and capacity building and advocacy; (ii) capturing joint activities that meet certain criteria; and (iii) cross-cutting activities by the Secretariat.

34.   Ms. El-Korri, in her presentation on the AFSD Taskforce, raised the following key points:

34.1   Ms. El-Korri noted that the purpose of the Taskforce was to have more focused groups to work together on specific outputs.

34.2   She also noted that the Taskforce has three functions: (i) Regional Consultation; (ii) Follow-up and Review; and (iii) Capacity Building and Peer Learning.

34.3   Ms. El-Korri confirmed that the AFSD is held annually and its report is submitted to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). This years' AFSD will be aligned with the theme of this years' HLPF which will be on *Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Arab States.*

34.4   Ms. Korri referred to the need to have members who can commit the time and have an interest in the topic.

34.5   She confirmed that the first meeting of the Taskforce will take place in December by way of WebEx, where the proposed workplan and options will be reviewed.

35.   Mr. Adel Abdellatif, in his presentation on the Country Support Taskforce raised the following key points:

35.1   The Country Support Taskforce will carry out an inventory of what UNCTs are doing at the country level.

35.2   He noted that the Taskforce will undertake a stock-taking of regional plans and activities to identify support needs for UNCTs.

35.3   Mr. Abdellatif also suggested that there is a need to reconsider the continued relevance of the MAPS approach, as it was designed to help countries adapt the SDGs at the beginning and that this approach is no longer seen as useful for some UNCTs.

36.   Mr. Juraj Riecan in his presentation on the SDG Data Taskforce raised the following key points:

36.1   Mr. Riecan noted that the SDG Data Taskforce is Co-Chaired by ESCWA and UNFPA.

36.2   He also noted that the Taskforce is carrying out an inventory of what different agencies are doing to improve coordination and that the Taskforce is coordinating statistical capacity development to make the best use of limited resources.

36.3   Mr. Riecan indicated that the Taskforce will act as a knowledge sharing platform.

37.   Ms. El-Korri, in her presentation on the ASDR Taskforce, raised the following key points:

37.1   Ms. El-Korri noted that the ASDR is not only a regional report that reviews the SDGs thematically or by cluster, but is also a situation report which needs to be produced every four years to review progress in SDG implementation.

37.2   The ASDR will be launched at the 2019 HLPF.

37.3   The first meeting of members of the Taskforce will be by way of WebEx in December 2017 where working modalities, responsibilities, key mile stones and contributions will be agreed.

38. Some of the key points for the discussion were as follows:

38.1 Members were urged to submit or confirm nominations to the 2030 Agenda Working Group and four Taskforces.

38.2 ESCWA recognized that membership of the RCM Working Groups and Taskforces are always a challenge and called on RCM members to nominate a focal point and an alternate focal point who would commit to active participation.

38.3 UNDP suggested looking at the work of the 2030 Agenda WG to identify areas of synergies across the various taskforces. The 2030 Agenda WG could then suggest ways to pool resources and coordinate similar activities.

38.4 UNICEF suggested that there is a need to look at the relevance of the SDG interactions identified in day one of the RCM meeting and how to integrate these into the workplans of the 2030 Agenda WG and Taskforces. UNICEF queried whether the 2030 Agenda WG could identify areas of synergies across the various agencies involved in SDG implementation.

38.5 ESCWA noted the need to identify priority areas of work for the 2030 Agenda WG, where members can coordinate, and noted that not all work of the agencies on the 2030 Agenda needs to fall under the brief of the 2030 Agenda WG or Taskforces.

38.6 ESCWA referred to the calendar of events for upcoming events on the 2030 Agenda and called on members to visit the calendar to see what other agencies are doing. It was suggested that the calendar be used for meetings of the RCM working groups and Taskforces as well.

38.7 ILO referred to the Country Support Taskforce and noted that UNCTs already have their own taskforces and suggested that there is a need to work with them to exchange information to avoid overlaps with all RCM Working Groups and Taskforces.

38.8 ISDR queried how non-members of the 2030 WG and Taskforces can contribute.WHO suggested that there should be a repository of the work of RCM Working Groups, accessible to everyone and that the calendar of events should include all 2030 Agenda WG events and teleconferences.

38.9 The 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development will be organized in April 2018 by ESCWA in coordination with regional UN entities and LAS. ESCWA and LAS agreed that the Arab Week represents an important regional meeting which, for optimal impact, could be held in the last quarter of 2018.

38.10 ESCWA said that in partnership with RCM members, it will be preparing a regional situation report on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs once every four years.

39. The key recommendations for the Session were as follows:

39.1 The Country Support Taskforce should look at what existing country-level taskforces are doing and report back to the RCM.

39.2 The 2030 Agenda WG Secretariat should set up a repository of all the work of the Working Group and Taskforces, accessible by everyone.

39.3   The 2030 Agenda WG members should share with ESCWA events and teleconferences and ESCWA to update the calendar of events accordingly.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

DATE AND VENUE

40.   The twenty-third meeting of the RCM was held at UN House, Beirut, Lebanon on 20 – 21 November 2017.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

H. E. Mr. Ahmad Aboul Gheit
Secretary-General
Cairo, Egypt

Mr. Islam Abdullah Hassan
3rd Secretary
Cairo, Egypt

H. E. Ambassador Hossam Zaki
Assistant Secretary-General, Chef de Cabinet
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: hossam.zaki@las.int

Ms. Nada El-Agizy
Director of Sustainable Development and
International Cooperation
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: nagizy@las.int

B. SPECIAL INVITEES

Professor David Griggs
Professor of Sustainable Development
Monash University in Australia and
Warwick University in the UK
E-mail: dave.griggs@monash.edu

C. UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES AND FUNDS

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
(UNAIDS)

Ms. Yamina Chakker
Director of the Regional Support Team
for the Middle East and North Africa Region
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: chakkary@unaids.org

Mr. Cathal Elder
Regional Coordination Specialist
Amman, Jordan
E-mail: cathal.elder@one.un.org

United Nations Development Programme
(UNDP)

United Nations Development Group (UNDG)

Mr. Mourad Wahba
Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Assistant Administrator of UNDP and Director of
The UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States
New York, United States
E-mail: Mourad.wahba@one.un.org

Mr. Adel Abdellatif
Chief, Regional Programme Division
Regional Bureau of Arab States
New York, United States
E-mail: adel.abdellatif@undp.org

Ms. Varsha Redkar-Palepu
UN Regional Coordination Specialist
New York, United States
E-mail: varsha.redkar-palepu@undp.org

United Nations Human Settlements Programme
(UN-Habitat)
Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad
Director, Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS)
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: zena.ali-ahmad@unhabitat.org

15

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Mr. Luay Shabaneh
Regional Director
Arab States Regional Office
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: shabaneh@unfpa.org

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Mr. Geert Cappelaere
Regional Director
Amman, Jordan
E-mail: gcappelaere@unicef.org

Ms. Josiane Khoury
Donor Relations Specialist
Beirut, Lebanon
E-mail: jkhoury@unicef.org

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

Mr. Toily Kurbanov
Deputy Executive Coordinator
Management Services
Bonn, Germany
E-mail: toily.kurbanov@unv.org

Ms. Sophie Lesselin,
Programme Manager
Amman, Jordan
E-mail : sophie.lesselin@unv.org

World Food Programme (WFP)

Mr. Mohannad Hadi
Regional Director
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: muhannad.hadi@wfp.org

Ms. Rosella Fanelli,
Head of Government Relations and Partnerships,
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: rossella.fanelli@wfp.org

D. UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations (FAO)

Mr. Abdessalam OuldAhmed
Regional Director,
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: abdessalam.ouldahmed@fao.org

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Ms. Ruba Jaradat
Regional Director
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: jaradat@ilo.org

Mr. Frank Hagemann
Deputy Regional Director
Regional Office for Arab States
Beirut, Lebanon
E-mail: hagemann@ilo.org

Ms. Shaza Ghaleb al-Jondi
Regional United Nations Coherence
and Resource Mobilization Officer
Regional Office for Arab States
Beirut, Lebanon
E-mail: jondi@ilo.org

United Nations Educational, Scientific and United
Nations Industrial Development Organisation
(UNIDO)

Mr. Cristiano Pasini,
Representative in Lebanon
Beirut, Lebanon
E-mail: c.pasini@unido.org

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Ms. Carmela Godeau
Regional Director
Regional Office for the Middle East
and North Africa
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: cgodeau@iom.int

Ms. Kristina Mejo,
Regional Liaison and Policy Officer
Regional Office for the Middle East
and North Africa
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: kmejo@iom.org.

Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Mr. Ghaith Fariz
Director
Regional Bureau for Sciences
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: g.fariz@unesco.org.

Mr. Hamed Al Hamami,
Director,
Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States
UNESCO Office, Beirut, Lebanon
E-mail: h.alhammami@unesco.org.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
(UNODC)

Ms. Elisabet Sundsroem
Regional Programme Coordinator
Beirut, Lebanon

United Nations Office for Project Services
(UNOPS)

Ms. Bana Kaloti
Regional Director for the Middle East
Amman, Jordan
E-mail: banak@unops.org.

United Nations Women (UN Women)

Mr. Mohammad Naciri,
Regional Director
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: mohannad.naciri@unwomen.org.

Ms. Josephine Moss,
Regional Planning and Coordination Specialist
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: josephine.moss@unwomen.org.

World Health Organization (WHO)

Ms. Rayana Bou-Haka
Manager, Country Focus Support
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail : bouhakar@who.int.

G.   United Nations departments and offices

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian
Affairs (OCHA)

Mr. Iyad Nasr
Regional Director
Regional Office for MENA (ROMENA)
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: nasri@un.org

Mr. Mirielle Girard,
Representative for Lebanon
Beirut, Lebanon

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
(UNISDR)

Mr. Sujit Mohanty
Chief of Office
Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS)
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: mohanty@un.org

Mr. Mohammad Fadi Jannan
Deputy Chief of Office
Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS)
Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: jannan@un.org

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Mr. Abdel Salam Sidahmed,
Regional Director,
Regional Office for the Middle East
Beirut, Lebanon
E-mail: asidahmed@ohchr.org

F. UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

Economic and Social Commission for Western
Asia (ESCWA)

HE Mr. Mohamed Ali Al Hakim
Executive Secretary
E-mail: ma.alhakim@un.org

Ms. Karima El Korri
Chief of the Population and Social
Development Section
Social Development Division
E-mail: elkorri@un.org

Ms. Khawla Mattar,
Deputy Executive Secretary
E-mail: mattark@un.org

Ms. Roula Majdalani
Director, Sustainable Development
Policies Division
E-mail: majdalani@un.org

Mr. Juraj Riecan
Director of the Statistics Division
E-mail : riecan@un.org

Ms. Ramla Khalidi
Chief of the Strategy, Evaluation and
Partnerships Section
Planning, Partnerships and Technical Cooperation
Division
E-mail :khalidir@un.org

Mr. Karim Khalil
Secretary of the Commission,
Office of the Executive Secretary
E-mail: khalil31@un.org

Ms. Maisaa Youssef,
Sustainable Development Officer
E-mail: youssef8@un.org

Mr. Martti Antola
Resource Mobilization Officer
Strategy, Evaluations and Partnerships Section
Planning, Partnerships and Technical Cooperation
Division
E-mail : antola@un.org

Ms. Anne Dalitz
Associate Expert, 2030 Global Goals
Strategy, Evaluation and Partnerships Section.
E-mail: anne.dalitz@un.org

Mr. Enda Nevin
Administrative and Research Assistant
Strategy, Evaluations and Partnerships Section
Planning, Partnerships and
Technical Cooperation Division
E-mail: nevin@un.org

H. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

World Bank
Ms. Mouna Couzi
Representative for Lebanon
Email: mcouzi@worldbank.org.

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

1. Agenda

<u>**Session I:**</u> **Harmonising UN and LAS Efforts**

2. 2017 Progress Report – RCM working Group on International Migration.

3. Proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Water.

4. Proposed Workplan for the revised Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition.

<u>**Session II:**</u> **RCM Working Group Updates**

5. Progress Report: International Migration Working Group.

6. Workplan: Food Security and Nutrition Working Group.

7. Terms of Reference: Working Group on Water.

<u>**Session III:**</u> **Entry Points for an Integrated, Cross-Sectoral Approach to Development Programming**

8. Presentation – How to deal with the Interactions of the SDGS – Professor David Griggs.

9. WFP Paper on Food Security, Conflict and SDG achievement in MENA – Leveraging the Humanitarian Development Nexus.

10. UNEP Paper on Integrating the Environment into the 2030 Agenda.

<u>**Session IV:**</u> **Review the Implications of the QCPR on Regional Level Work and Programmes**

11. Presentation – Review the implications of the QCPR on regional level work and programmes.

<u>**Session V:**</u> **Wrap-up Day One**

12. UN Deputy Secretary-General's Statement.

<u>**Session VI:**</u> **Meeting of the Joint Working Group on the 2030 Agenda**

13. Presentation –Working Group on the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region.

14. Presentation – Arab Forum for Sustainable Development Taskforce.

15. Presentation – Arab Sustainable Development Report Taskforce.

16. 2017 Progress Report - RCM Working Group on the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region.

17. 2017 Progress Report – RCM Taskforce on the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

18. 2017 Progress Report – RCM Taskforce on the Arab Sustainable Development Report.

19. 2017 Progress Report – RCM Taskforce on Country Support.

20. Proposed Workplan for the RCM Taskforce on SDG Data.