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Report

Expert group meeting on empowerment, inclusiveness and equality as pathways to peace and sustainable development in the Arab region Beirut, 8 April 2019

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and Regional Hub for Arab States of the United Nations Development Programme, in partnership with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, organized a regional expert group meeting on the theme “Empowerment, inclusiveness and equality as pathways to peace and sustainable development in the Arab region”, held in Beirut on 8 April 2019. Participants included representatives of think tanks, academics, decision makers and staff members from the United Nations system.

The meeting examined dilemmas in conflict-affected countries. Practitioners and peacebuilders face fraying social contracts and State institutions, a narrow communally driven discourse and national fragmentation, while addressing the humanitarian repercussions of conflict. Within that context, the meeting unpacked the principles of inclusiveness, empowerment and equality, and how they relate to sustainable development and peacebuilding. The meeting examined how policies that improve inclusiveness, empowerment and equality could mitigate the impact of conflict, build the resilience of communities, and chart a pathway to peace. The discourse was framed under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with an emphasis on Goal 16 given that seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Participants agreed that progress towards the 17 SDGs in an integrated manner would significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, in addition to promoting peace and improving livelihoods. Among the recommendations, experts agreed on the importance of developing policy responses to the vicious circle of conflict and underdevelopment in the Arab region. The priority must be to avoid conflict recurrence and cement sustainable peace. Solving the communal dilemma and building State-level institutions providing the basis for crafting national identity were key components of the reconciliation process. The provision of equality-maximizing public goods and the increase of State capacity for local and regional authorities were important measures in that direction.

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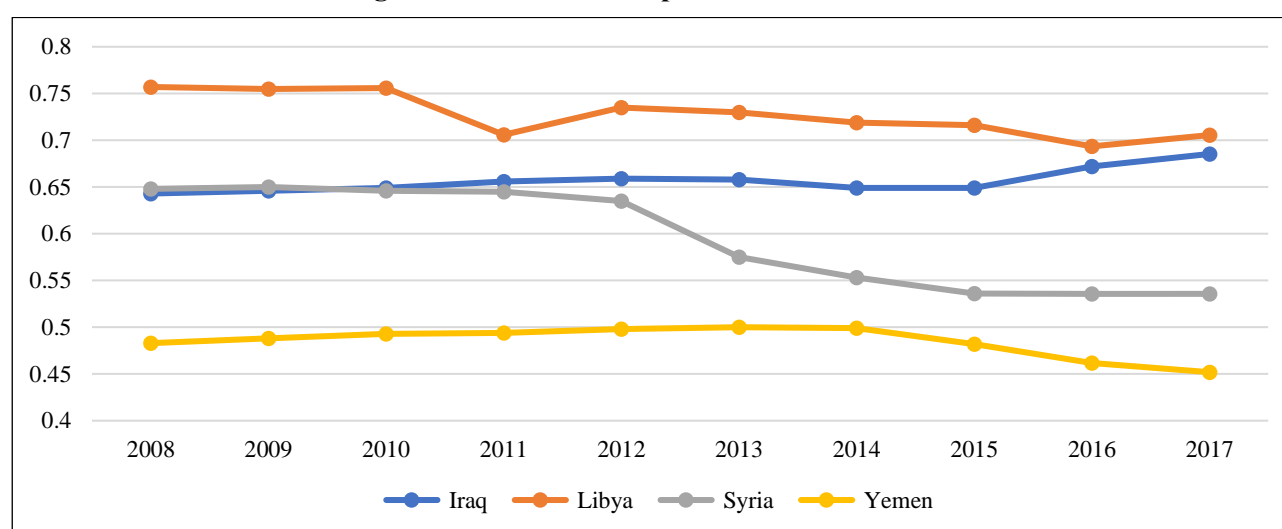
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Introduction

1. The Arab region is facing numerous development challenges associated with ongoing conflicts and transitions. More than ever, interventions that chart pathways to peace and sustainable development are needed. These should not only serve to prevent conflict relapse, but also to effectively address the impact of conflict on tens of millions of people. Consequently, peacebuilding policies must strengthen governance and institutions, while trying to arrest or even reverse human capital deterioration resulting from conflict.

2. Challenges in conflict-affected countries are enormous. Practitioners and peacebuilders face fraying social contracts and State institutions, a narrow communally driven discourse and national fragmentation, while addressing the humanitarian repercussions of conflict: 59 million people are dependent on some form of humanitarian assistance and some 29 million are forcibly displaced. Around 18.4 million school-aged children required assistance to continue their education in the seven crisis countries in 2017. Arab countries in crisis display low scores in the Human Development Index (HDI), with Yemen ranking bottom with the lowest HDI figures since 2000 (figure 1).

Figure 1. Human Development Index, 2008-2017



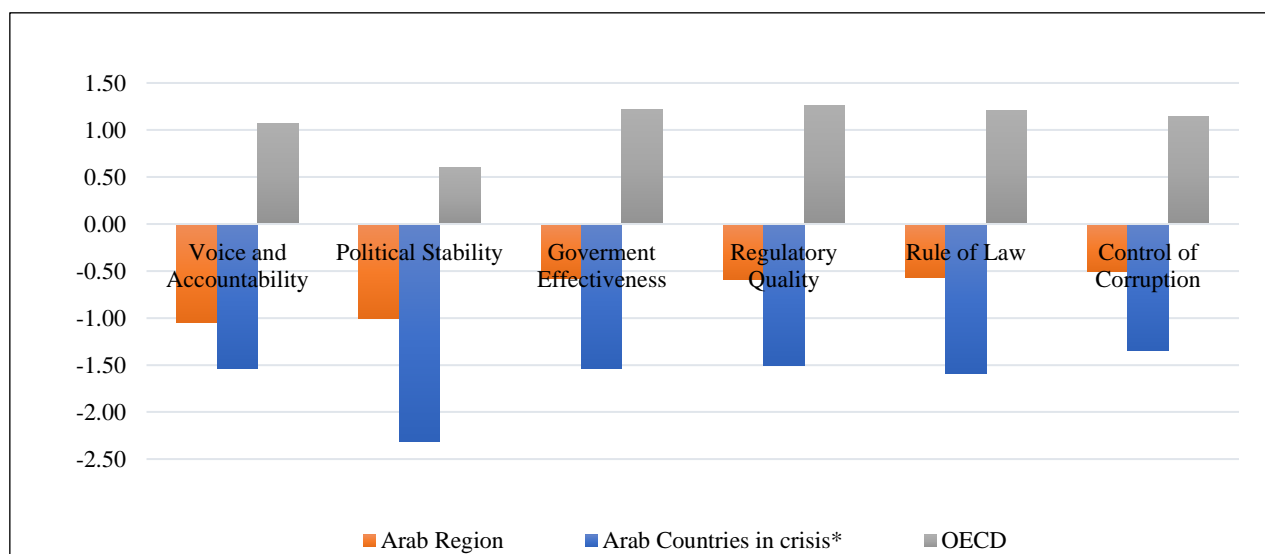
Source: Human Development Index, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Note: HDI is a composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

3. Conflict-affected countries in the Arab region have their institutional capacity diminished, and as such are unable to reverse the negative impact of conflict, manage national assets or resolve contentious issues. As measured by the Worldwide Governance Indicators, these countries also perform worse than the regional average in all six dimensions of governance, namely voice and public accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. It is therefore no surprise that five Arab countries are among the top 11 in the Fragile States Index.

4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets offer a comprehensive framework for transitioning towards peace and for reversing de-development trends resulting from conflict, including better agency in managing political contention, and national resources and strategies for sustainable development. The 17 Goals and their targets ultimately seek to strengthen universal peace by realizing human rights of all, and to achieve the empowerment of all through inclusive and strong institutions. SDG 16 is of particular relevance to the Arab region. It aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Progress towards achieving this Goal would build peace and improve the livelihoods of millions living in conflict-affected countries.

Figure 2. Worldwide Governance Index by region, 2017



Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from the Worldwide Governance Index 2018 Update, World Bank.

Note: Estimates range from approximately -2.5 (weak performance) to 2.5 (strong performance).

* Iraq, Libya, State of Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

5. In this context, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States, in partnership with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, organized a regional expert group meeting on the theme “Empowerment, inclusiveness and equality as pathways to peace and sustainable development in the Arab region”, which was held in Beirut on 8 April 2019.

6. The meeting unpacked the principles of inclusiveness, empowerment and equality, and considered their links to sustainable development and peacebuilding in conflict settings. A core aspect of the meeting was to examine ways to operationalize inclusiveness, empowerment and equality, and how those principles mitigated the impact of conflict, built the resilience of communities and charted a pathway to peace. The meeting reviewed global and regional lessons learned where enhanced empowerment, inclusiveness and equality succeeded in supporting transitions to peace, including promoting inclusive societies.

7. The meeting also served as a platform to strengthen academic networks and generate greater synergy between research and development interventions working towards ensuring peace and achieving the SDGs.

I. Recommendations

8. In developing policy responses to the vicious circle of conflict and underdevelopment in the Arab region, the priority must be to avoid conflict recurrence and solidify peace as a sustainable equilibrium. Solving the communal (ethno-sectarian) dilemma and building State-level institutions that provide the basis for crafting national identity are key components of reconciliation processes. The provision of equality-maximizing public goods and the increase of State capacity for local and regional authorities are important measures in that direction.

9. Participants underscored the importance of the political dimension. The minority/majority paradigm was being widely used and had a political construct. There was a need to move away from ideological bigotry. There was also a need to take into consideration geopolitical factors and the models of development that led to the current state of affairs in the Arab region.

10. Ethno-sectarian victimization was planting the seeds of the conflicts of tomorrow, which needed to be addressed through effective reconciliation mechanisms founded on equality, inclusion and empowerment, where access to essential services (health, water, sanitation, education and security) is provided to all without prejudice.
11. Inclusion (in settlements) should be achieved at the geopolitical level through existing multilateral and regional mechanisms that need to be strengthened.
12. Devising strategies to ensure a smooth transition to a new social contract should focus on the following:
 - (a) Emphasizing strategies that ensure smooth power transfers between elites and marginalized populations to minimize social divisions and promote cohesion;
 - (b) Building institutional capacity to address grievances (judicial, structural, legal, constitutional);
 - (c) Enforcing constitutional reforms in the government and public sectors to create more inclusive institutional structures and increase participation of marginalized populations in decision-making;
 - (d) Promoting links between community groups and other sectors and actors at the local and regional levels;
 - (e) Ensuring balance between multistakeholder involvement and horizontal intersectoral coherence and coordination.
13. Empowering people is a critical aspect of resilient societies, which also assists in the prevention of conflict. This requires inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. Inequalities and exclusion need to be addressed at the structural and institutional levels. Institutions should be supported in applying a preventive, participatory and risk-informed approach to development strategies. At the community level, the meaningful engagement of citizenry implies enabling them to operate as competent and active citizens, to develop a sense of collective identity and agency, to identify and mobilize resources, and to share decision and socio-political power dynamics.
14. It is vital to apply a systems approach to community reconciliation that connects the macro and micro systems of society including focus on multiple levels of relationships between citizens, communities, and the state (inter-personal, inter-group, intercommunity, central Government). At the individual and communal levels, this includes utilizing methods that promote empathy, forgiveness, and cooperation between conflicting parties to rebuild basic social bonds within a community, to encourage the acceptance of former militants or perpetrators, to improve relations between formerly fighting groups, and to build a wider sense of community. At the central Government level, this entails establishing effective linkages between communities and local and national government by devising policies and strategies that promote inclusive structures, social justice, and economic growth.
15. Citizen and community participation in decision-making could be enhanced by developing facilitation, debate and deliberation skills to enable community empowerment and community-led transformational resilience to manage change.
16. Orienting cultural practices towards peace-building and community reconciliation is vital to help promote the restructuring of collective identities and narratives in ways that strengthen unity and peace. The development of peacebuilding strategies must be led by local communities and embedded in local cultures to promote a sense of ownership and to ensure sustainability and legitimacy.
17. Redesigning school curriculums is the best way to initiate a pathway to peace by embedding peacebuilding education and integrated education, especially in contexts of severe religious, ethnic, or cultural divisions in a country or community. In such a context, it is essential to devise strategies to strengthen community participation in education management and decision-making processes, including decisions about

relevant school curriculums and monitoring the implementation of education programmes. Proper structures could also play a role in strengthening civil society and social bonding, and in connecting to policy makers and government institutions.

18. Rather than promoting centralization, which facilitates rent-seeking and the provision of soft budget constraints from the central Government toward regional and local administrations, fiscal decentralization allows subnational governments to raise their own income and compete for foreign direct investment. Fiscal decentralization could be an effective reform strategy under a strong central Government.

19. Greater support is needed to ensure the preservation and upgrade of rural value chains.

20. It is vital to set strategies to enhance representation of marginalized and disempowered groups when supporting decentralization efforts. It is also important to consider questions of voice and power to enhance perceptions of trust and legitimacy; for example, establishing mechanisms to ensure communities are able to easily communicate concerns to ministries.

21. Reducing violence through urban integration, management of common spaces (land and natural resources), spatial planning and equitable allocation of resources is also key in this context. An example of effective inclusion is Medellin in Colombia, where integrating urban areas that were once slums affected by drug trafficking was critical to transforming the city. The city invested in various measures for social inclusion and equity, such as a participatory process for citizens in urban planning, building infrastructure to connect the slums to cultural and public spaces, a community policing initiative, investments in schools and health, rehabilitating buildings and industrial sites, and employing locals to provide job opportunities.

22. One of the most effective demand-side policy tools to relax entry barriers to the labour market is the promotion of vocational training and counselling programmes, and the introduction of elements of psychology and behavioural economics that could help rebuild trust. To this end, the introduction of a national investment fund dedicated to finance vocational training and higher education institutions with the purpose of skill formation constitutes a central policy initiative towards equality and sustainable development. This equality fund could facilitate the integration of women and deprived communal groups into the labour market, while minimizing negative political externalities from the implementation of structural reforms. While it is extremely important to empower under-represented groups such as women and young people, the inclusion of men in such programmes is also crucial (as the Ecole de Maris' experience in sub-Saharan Africa showed), considering that they are a key factor in the theory of change.

23. Investment in social protection is crucial. For instance, while there are efforts in the Arab region towards compulsory health insurance coverage for all employees, they do not cover certain vulnerable groups like agricultural workers and informal sectors workers who may be the most in need, and who do not have formal employment or receive low salaries. Health insurance coverage still excludes vulnerable groups, thus reinforcing social inequalities. Insurance schemes are also underpinned by partnerships with private sector insurance companies, which means that access to good quality health care varies according to premiums paid, hence reinforcing social inequalities.

24. It is vital to balance short-term crisis management and long-term investment in inclusion by developing initiatives that intertwine political and economic elements, thus providing critical support in nutrition, water, social protection and urban services. Such a partnership among the United Nations and the World Bank in Yemen since 2015 had developed a humanitarian development-peace approach, and contributes to a common understanding of risks, needs, gaps, and opportunities.

25. Building inclusion for post-conflict stabilization and safe-guards against resurgence of violence is essential. For example, In Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) in June 2015 to help the Government stabilize cities and districts liberated from Islamic State, by employing local people to rehabilitate water, electricity and service delivery facilities.

26. Conflict resolution in the Arab region necessitates a strong national identity beyond ethno-sectarian dilemmas, and the establishment of central State institutions that reinforce national identity and diversity.
27. In developed countries, ethnic dominance is managed by guaranteeing rights to individuals so that they can challenge individual cases of discrimination. Moreover, group quotas in public employment or bilingual public schools are ways to reduce the risks of rebellion. Switzerland is a perfect example of an ethnically-dominated country (75 per cent of the population is German, with French and Italian minorities). Switzerland has adopted an inclusive environment for the French and Italian minorities by introducing ethnic quotas, multilingual education and political-administrative decentralization to guarantee every citizen's rights. For example, the law mandates that a certain percentage of jobs are allocated to ethnic groups according to their size.
28. Strategies of economic reform are at the core of justice-driven equality measures. The identification of appropriate trade-offs for each post-conflict society in the Arab region is key to a participatory governance system and long-term economic growth.
29. The creation of an extrovert entrepreneurial class, which is not parasitically dependent on the highly oligarchic industries and services of the Middle East, is a very important element in the process of peace consolidation.
30. It is necessary to reduce regressive and costly subsidies that are often abused by the privileged to improve the business environment and to encourage investments and innovations, especially from the private sector.
31. The meritocratic selection of high-level bureaucrats through yardstick competition is an established factor of Chinese growth in development literature. The Arab region could become less unequal if bureaucrats compete on the basis of what they have accomplished, such as rise in income in a certain region or combatting ethnic, religious or gender inequality. The introduction of an equality-based accountability mechanism would reduce incentives for corruption and allow more women in central and subnational administrative agencies. Rendering regional equality a criterion for administrative promotion under conditions of yardstick competition could change the inequality map in the Arab region.
32. Applying public reform in regulations would help boost job creation by securing employment for citizens, especially young women and men, based on qualifications rather than connections. This also promotes a more effective operation of the public sector and enhances State legitimacy, which improves citizens' satisfaction in State performance.
33. It is important to explore possibilities of Internet/e-governance (for access to information; inclusive dialogue, participative decision-making schemes) to enhance accountability, transparency and participation. Increased government transparency would help regain trust in political institutions and citizen trust in the State, as well as the trust of investors in the market. Trust is conducive to further reforms, which eventually lead to further peace, security and prosperity.
34. The occupied Palestinian territory depends entirely on the Israeli economy and on external funding. It cannot create its own sectors. Palestinian society should therefore invest more efforts in creating a parallel economy. Different projects should be established in various sectors, but their sustainability must be ensured in the long term. The parallel economy should be organized as a transitional economy to allow productivity to continue.

II. Discussion

35. Participants examined the damage resulting from conflict and instability in the Arab region. Since 2011, the Arab region has witnessed continued political instability and conflict, ranging from social unrest in several countries to full-fledged wars in Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Conflicts and their growing

impact have dominated decision-making processes in many Arab countries for most of the past decade, in addition to the long-standing occupation of the Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan. These conflicts have had devastating impacts on national development trajectories and have generated spillover effects. Around half of Arab countries have been directly impacted by conflict, instability or crisis, and the other half indirectly from refugee flows, economic spillover effects, heightened regional conflict risk, and social polarization.

36. These challenges continue to weigh heavily on a region that suffers from a complicated set of development challenges that have been accumulating over the past few decades, including limited and poorly distributed growth, social and economic inequity and exclusion, significant climate change and environmental challenges, stressed water resources, food insecurity, and an encumbered economic situation burdened by significant structural inefficiencies, causing unemployment, in particular for young people, poverty and marginalization. Furthermore, the Arab region displays a poor track record where voice and accountability are concerned, which inevitably obstructs political and socioeconomic development.

37. The meeting unpacked three critical components for a pathway to peace: empowerment, inclusion, and equality. These three concepts can operate at several different levels. Firstly, these concepts could operate as worthy goals in and of themselves. More inclusive, more empowered, and more equal societies are fairer societies, more just societies, and societies with more respect for the dignity of all individuals and communities. Secondly, these concepts could operate as a means to other worthy ends. Policies that promote greater empowerment, greater inclusion, and greater equality may lead to peace, more social cohesion, or greater and fairer economic growth. Moreover, policies themselves can be designed to be implemented in more empowering ways, more inclusive ways, or more equal ways. Much of the discussions centered on how greater empowerment, inclusion and equality support the achievement of other worthy ends, such as peace and development. Thirdly, those concepts could operate at the level of civic values and cultures. For the Arab region, civic values are especially relevant because they are seen as enabling conditions – or even necessary conditions – for good governance and inclusive and sustainable development.

38. Five dominant pathways in the Arab region were identified: civil war, a communal-based oligarchy, a police State, occupation, and transition. Each pathway influences development outcomes, including empowerment, inclusion and equality. Four out of the five pathways carry with them challenges to empowerment, inclusion and equality. The impact of civil wars and their aftermath are particularly daunting in this regard. It is important to note that in 2017, one in every battle-related deaths registered worldwide took place in the Arab region. The Arab region displays all the elements that make wars longer and bloodier, and that make negotiated settlements difficult. The intervention of foreign powers, the existence of large number of factions and the fact that no one side can disarm the other have rendered conflicts protracted. Participants highlighted that the root causes and drivers of conflict, combined with their immediate and long-term impacts, would continue to perpetuate further conflicts. Longer conflicts eroded the political, social and economic factors constituting the three principles. There was agreement that the impact of conflict goes way beyond casualties, destroyed infrastructure destroyed or massive forced displacement. The breakdown of economic organizations, business networks, State institutions, society and, most importantly, human capital would take generations to remedy if conflicts were to stop immediately.

39. Yemen was discussed as an example of human capital degradation, in particular educational attainment. In 2006, Yemen was reporting greater than 90 per cent enrolment in primary schools and there was little to no gap in the primary enrolment rates between girls and boys. In 2013, enrolment showed troubling patterns. There was delayed enrolment among 6, 7 and 8-year olds compared with 2006. Girls were enrolling at significantly lower rates. Undoubtedly, analysis of new surveys would reveal worse patterns, given the chain of events after March 2015. For all practical purposes, human capital accumulation has stopped for the large cohort of children that dropped out of school. Moreover, about 70 per cent of the population is being pushed into severe poverty because of the conflict. While Yemen would have struggled to achieve SDGs even if the conflict had not happened, it would have been a lot closer to doing so than today.

40. This is the case for most conflict-affected countries in the Arab region. When children transition to adulthood and the job market, few will be fortunate enough to find low-wage jobs. Most will be trapped in a low-quality lifestyle for generations to come. Consequently, where empowerment, inclusiveness and equality were concerned, at least from the socioeconomic dimension, conflict-affected countries will be starting from a far less optimal threshold - they will be starting way below their pre-conflict development status.
41. It was argued that an initial assumption about the impact of conflict was that conflict-affected countries lost development rapidly. For example, some estimates show that one year of development was lost for every month of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, this did not apply in the post-conflict phase, when compensation schemes started kicking in. Some post-conflict countries return to development quicker than expected.
42. Participants noted that long-term investment was lacking in the region, and that the longer conflicts lasted, the longer it would take to get back on a sound development trajectory.
43. The issue of governance needs to be addressed in the Arab region. In other words, who is in charge of providing public goods?
44. Participants reflected on how empowerment, inclusion and equality operated as widely-held and widely-practised civic values in the Arab region. In recent years, many observers have claimed that violent conflict was damaging such values, polarizing public opinion, deepening sectarian cleavages, and hurting chances for lasting reconciliation and peacebuilding. Discussions focused on the type of policies and strategies that could repair damaged social fabric.
45. It is critical to understand that conflict exposure clusters geographically. Some districts and governorates at the national level are vastly more conflict-exposed than others and, as a result, strong subnational variations in development outcomes are to be expected in conflict affected countries. It was agreed that the three principles of empowerment, inclusion and equality in terms of impact and of operationalization/or development assistance were susceptible to such changing conflict patterns.
46. Participants discussed several socioeconomic indicators comparing the MENA region with other countries, including trust, gender inequality, religious and ethnic fractionalization and their impact on inclusion, potentially leading to the emergence or resurgence of conflict. Highlighted was the fact that interpersonal trust attitudes in the Arab World was the lowest worldwide. Deliberations also included other sources of concern preventing inclusion in the region, such as ethnic and religious fragmentations, low female labour participation, high youth unemployment and spatial exclusion. Participants agreed that the lack of inclusion in the region was a major issue affecting interpersonal trust.
47. The concept of 'empowerment' was debated, described as a multilevel construct at the personal, social and interactive levels. Empowerment is the belief that a person has the knowledge and capacity to effect change. Power relations exist between citizens and the State, but also between (local) communities. On political empowerment, the capacity to make choices and change is linked to the concepts of equality and meaningful participation (groups that have been excluded from participation, decision-making processes, education, employment and so forth need to be empowered). Participants explained that since there was a clear link between a lack of empowerment and violent conflict, empowering all layers of society was a necessity. Various obstacles hindered empowerment, such as increased risks of violence when the economic structure transformation of a country or region was too slow. The issue of slow economic structure transformation could result in the frustration of educated young people who experience long periods of unemployment.
48. Participants identified 'fear' as a key issue affecting empowerment. Many were hoping and expecting the so-called Arab Spring to be an entry point for change, resulting in more equal societies. However, the Arab Spring took place without 'knowing the next step' after the mass protests.

49. Participants agreed that inequality increased the propensity for conflict. Inequality comprises several concerns, such as access to resources and opportunities, as well as gender and ethnic inequalities, to name a few. The region scores the lowest globally in gender equality.
50. Participants also noted that inequality was a driver for regime change, and that the Middle East was considered ‘the most unequal’ in the world. Inequalities in the region take place in different political and socioeconomic dimensions, and at the level of individuals such as women.
51. Recent changes in the regional order resulted in a ‘black hole’ for a series of initiatives. The discourse or transition was taking various shapes, including violence. The region’s challenges still exist and are getting worse compared with 2011. Arab countries are also burdened by additional challenges, such as climate change or governance. While participants agreed that technology facilitated the inclusion of wider segments of society, they noted that a more productive intercommunication was needed. There was also a need to establish rules of the game to collectively find solutions for the way forward.
52. Several participants wondered whether there was a clear vision for change and whether that change was going to take place immediately. Questions were posed on whether the next generation was able to effect change, what type of change it had in mind, and if that change would include better governance.
53. Participants noted that the SDGs provided an overall framework or guidelines for societal movements to unfold alongside government reform. Moreover, the knowledge society should be highly involved in such processes.
54. Participants argued that sustainable development could not be achieved because of a lack of freedom and sovereignty, and because of the structural barriers set by occupation. Inclusiveness and equality go hand in hand with peace and development. Moreover, universal values are being contested in the Arab region: it is necessary to ensure that these terms are contextualized.
55. At present, some civil society organizations may be competing against each other for funds, which could impede development.
56. The nature of the ‘settler-colonial’ occupation in the State of Palestine creates an ongoing structure that controls space, resources and people, not only by occupying land but also by perpetuating underdevelopment resulting from a series of agreements that cement legal, economic and political fragmentation. This ensures the co-option of the Palestinian economy to a global neoliberal economy, through privatization, which results in structural poverty and unemployment. In this context, much of the productive population has been marginalized.
57. Experts highlighted the potential role of the national army in bringing all minorities into one unified body, and its potential drawbacks as an approach for inclusiveness.
58. The identity crisis in the Arab region was re-examined, explaining its historical basis and the potential outlook of building an identity that was more rooted in shared civil values.
59. Participants maintained that identity was dynamic in nature and that the MENA region was rich in subnational identities. Experts suggested some key entry points to influence change through local leaders and facilitators. However, some items were missing, such as politically backed mechanisms for deconfliction, community self-consciousness of conflict drivers and implications; while the main issues remained, including forced migration, access to power, services, resources and security. Participants also examined the power structure between national and local elites, given the limited success of achieving the SDGs and Millennium Development Goals. One key aspect of national heterogeneity was rural-urban inequality in development efforts, which put more pressure on an already fragile urban infrastructure through rural-urban movement. The

Libyan case illustrated the challenges of a dynamic conflict and how empowerment and reconciliation were obstructed by weakened tribunals and strong tribal identities.

III. Organization of work

A. Venue and date

60. The expert group meeting on the theme “Empowerment, inclusiveness and equality as pathways to peace and sustainable development in the Arab region”, was held in Beirut on 8 April 2019.

B. Opening

61. Mr. Tarik Alami, Director of the ESCWA Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division; Mr. Jos de la Haye, Team Leader of Peacebuilding and Governance Cluster at the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States; and Mr. Tarek Mitri, Director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, welcomed participants and introduced the objectives of the meeting. Mr. Alami noted that the mandates of ESCWA were to quantify the impacts of conflict, identify their root causes, and advocate for reforms and public policies that member States could adopt to reverse or mitigate the impact of regional trends. He added that ESCWA and its partners had organized this meeting to see whether there were pathways to peace and sustainable development for Arab countries. He said that ESCWA and UNDP had adopted the phrase “Pathways to Peace” from a recent joint publication by the United Nations and the World Bank, which presented a global picture of the sources of peace and sustainable development, and offered some global lessons for policymakers and their stakeholders. ESCWA and UNDP thought it would be helpful to take the publication’s global framework and apply it to the Arab region to contextualize its findings, and adapt the lessons to the specific conflicts and crises that the Arab region was facing.

C. Participants

62. The meeting was attended by participants from academia, think tanks and staff members from the United Nations system working in crisis or transition contexts.

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