



United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia  
The National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme



## Information Note

NAFS Expert Group Meeting to prioritize stabilization initiatives in Syria  
26 – 27 July 2017  
UN ESCWA  
Beirut, Lebanon

### 1 Background

Since 2011, the Syrian conflict has created a violent scene inside Syria and in the neighboring countries, threatening the security and stability of the entire region. The conflict has taken thousands of lives, reduced the country's national income and undermined social cohesion. The conflict in Syria today has most probably become the worst and most expensive conflict in the region and the world as a whole. A large majority of Syrians has lost their livelihoods and the protracted conflict continues to worsen the living conditions of the people living in the country. Securing basic needs has become a major challenge for most Syrians inside and outside the country.

As part of its mandate to promote human development and democratic transition in the region, UN ESCWA launched the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme in 2012 to engage Syrian experts and stakeholders in developing policy alternatives for Syria in preparation for a post-agreement phase.

The NAFS Programme has involved around 165 experts and aims to regularly discuss and formulate policy alternatives for the future of Syria. To ensure that these policy options also respond to the current challenges caused by the conflict, NAFS regularly studies the impact of the conflict looking at macro-economic developments, as well sector-by-sector damages, needs and coping mechanisms. To set forward-looking priorities for the policy alternatives, Syrian experts have agreed upon a set of principles for a vision for Syria in 2030.

Furthermore, and in order to adjust the long-term vision to the realities of a still ongoing conflict, the experts have developed scenarios for how the conflict may end, to have a realistic starting point for reconstruction and recovery and adjust the policy alternatives accordingly. The policy alternatives themselves were designed to mitigate the social, economic and governance challenges of the conflict, help build stability and support post-agreement reconstruction, as well as respond to the root causes of the conflict. They reflect the interlinked challenges and opportunities across sectors, and are sequenced according to what the key priorities will be during the peace building and the state building phases, as identified by the NAFS Programme. The policy alternatives and the analyses they were based upon were compiled in the Strategic Policy Alternatives Framework (SPAF) document, which was launched on 27 January 2017.

The SPAF summarizes the work the Programme undertook during its first phase (2012-2016) and will remain a “living document” updated annually to reflect and respond to the developments inside the country during the second phase of the Programme.

To this end, the NAFS Programme will continue to engage Syrian stakeholders in the process of continuously revising and updating the policy alternatives for the peace building and state building phases aiming at translating these policy alternatives into guidance notes to inform interventions and initiatives at the local level to support resilience and promote stabilization.

In that context, the NAFS Programme will host an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) where experts will discuss the SPAF document and outline the priorities for the stabilization initiatives.

## **2 Objectives of the Meeting**

The EGM has three main objectives:

### **1. Relevance of SPAF:**

The experts will review the principles for Vision 2030, the methodology used for the two-phased approach (peace building and state building phases) and the nexus approach relevant to the peace building phase, taking into consideration the challenges and the political transformation setup in Syria. The EGM falls in line with the ongoing work of NAFS to update the SPAF annually while ensuring it remains relevant and reflective of the views of the broadest spectrum of Syrians.

### **2. Guidance to the structure of the update of the SPAF:**

The experts will discuss the relevance of the nexus approach methodology in updating the SPAF and thereafter the annual needs assessments report, which defines the key socio-politico-economic needs at the regional/local level. Moreover, the experts will identify the key elements of the outline of the next updated SPAF. This will inform the structure and framework for the update of the SPAF document.

### **3. Translating theory into practice:**

The experts will explore possible interventions in Syria that could respond to the immediate needs of the population while maintaining the linkages to the long-term vision as inspired by the SPAF. In order to do so, they will identify the relevant policy alternatives and set the priorities from the relevant nexus during the pre-agreement phase (meaning today) and in the peace building phase. This step will constitute the building block for developing the guidance notes to inform stabilization initiatives in Syria. These initiatives will address livelihood, basic services and infrastructure needs, as well as local governance structures and support the overall peace dialogue. They will also aim to inform the valuable work undertaken by United Nations Agencies, humanitarian actors and civil society inside Syria.

### **3 Organization of the Meeting**

The NAFS Programme will host the “NAFS Expert Group Meeting to prioritize stabilization initiatives in Syria” on 26 and 27 July 2017 at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon.

In preparation for the meeting, a specially designed questionnaire will be sent out ahead to participants along with the SPAF document to collect input that will eventually feed into the process of updating the SPAF.

The first day of the meeting will consist of a plenary session where experts will be asked to discuss, comment on and revise the principles for the Vision for Syria 2030, the methodology of the two phased approach and the nexus approach (logic, structure, relevance, cross impact) in light of the current challenges inside Syria.

During the second day of the EGM, the experts will discuss the policy alternatives of the nexus relevant to the Peace Building Phase. The experts will work in thematic working groups to assess the challenges and needs the country is facing, identify and prioritize a set of policy alternatives from the nexus according to a set of criteria to determine their importance.

Having set the priorities for each nexus, the experts will be asked to define the task force setup and the tools that could guide the design of the stabilization initiatives during the pre-agreement phase.

### **4 Correspondence**

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