



الأمم المتحدة

الاقتصاد

ESCWA

## Expert Group Meeting

# Triggers of Transformation: Resilient Governance Institutions in Conflict Affected Countries

1 & 2 December 2015

UN House Beirut – Lebanon

### Background

States in fragile settings are housing over one quarter of the world's population. Today, at least half of the Arab states are affected directly or indirectly by armed conflicts of varying intensity, impeding peoples' fundamental right to live their lives free from fear and want. Conflict in the region has resulted in catastrophic loss of life, displaced over 22 million people and severely disrupted livelihoods. It has at minimum reduced the quality of life, compromised the capabilities of people to lead a dignified life while severely undermined sustainable opportunities for development. Beyond the far reaching impact of conflict on human lives and socioeconomic opportunities, it has severely eroded institutions, polarized societies and fractured the social cohesion.<sup>1</sup>

In the Arab region, ill developed social, political, economic and administrative accountability mechanisms have for decades marginalized large segments of the population, leaving their needs unaddressed. Rising poverty, widening income inequality, high unemployment especially among youth and women, and limited political representation is a clear manifestation of the antagonizing reality. There is a growing governance deficit, in particularly in areas of rule of law, human rights and social justice, in addition to non-existing or deficient reconciliation processes coupled with the increased utilization of an exclusivist extreme religious discourse that cancels "the other." This trend poses a grave threat to the pluralistic nature of a region known to be ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse and has contributed to rendering several conflicts in the region protracted.

The level and impact of on-going conflicts is unprecedented. The Arab region faces daunting challenges to effectively respond and generate political will towards opening spaces for effective national dialogue processes that would reflect popular aspirations, firmly anchored in universal principles of human rights. Restoring political consensus and social cohesion in order to start the rehabilitation process demands steady investment and political resolve. The development of representative, responsive, accountable and just institutions, able to deliver services equitably is essential for countries to respond to the

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ECLAC (2007) defined social cohesion "as the dialectical relationship between mechanisms of social inclusion/exclusion and people's reactions, perceptions and attitudes to the ways in which these mechanisms operate in producing a sense of belonging to society" in Tokman, 2007:81, in Jenson, J. (2010). 'Defining and Measuring Social Cohesion: Social Policies in Small States Series, No. 1.' (Common Wealth Secretariat: London).

immediate needs of the population and thereby create non-violent channels to prevent relapse into conflicts.

### **Objective**

The aim of this thematic consultation is to challenge core assumptions and lay out a relevant framework for rethinking the unique challenges that the current conflict contexts pose to processes of building state capacity to serve peacebuilding and prevent conflict relapse. More specifically, the objective is to identify priority issues for a conflict sensitive approach to governance in conflict-affected contexts and discern conflict triggers and peace enablers that could assist the transformation out of conflict.

The term of conflict governance capacities is used in this consultation to convey an array of activities ranging from conflict prevention to transformation and peacebuilding, including reconciliation, peace enforcement, social cohesion, de-radicalization and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. The discussion will attempt to discern the necessary steps required to assist member states form nationally owned processes of transition out of conflict. To this end, participants will include prominent experts and practitioners from international organizations, academic institutions, research think tanks, as well as decision-makers, civil society organizations and other informed parties.

Session I and II will analyze the conflict dynamics and its impacts in addition to radicalization trends in the region with a focus on governance deficits and the ways in which violent conflict has eroded state institutions and affected social cohesion.

Session III will discuss best practices and lessons learnt from international and regional peacebuilding, de-radicalization and statebuilding experiences. It will explore the importance of forming the foundations for resilient and responsive governance institutions as a critical component to the transition process.

Session IV will consider regionally relevant frameworks to assist member states in rebuilding state capacities, and social cohesion; and supporting transitions in the current context.

Session V will identify peace enablers by exploring avenues for reiterating existing efforts at the national and regional level and propose benchmarks for monitoring progress in the future.

Session VI will analyze the building blocks for transition to peace against the Post 2015 Development Agenda and prioritize implications for research and programming activities.

# Work Programme

## Day One: 01 December 2015

9:00-9:30

Registration

9:30 – 10:00

Welcoming Remarks and Introductions

Mr. Tarik Alami, Director of Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division, ESCWA

Ms. Malin Herwig, Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding, Programme Advisor for Arab States, Regional Hub, UNDP Amman

10:00 – 11:45

### Session I: The impact of conflict: Development challenges and weakening state institutions

**Chairperson:** Mr. Fares Braizat, Director, Research and Evaluation, Office of His Majesty King Abdullah II, Royal Hashemite Court Amman, Jordan

- How to define state institutions in the various countries of the region? How do the citizens perceive the role of the State and its institutions in the different countries of the region?
- How is conflict affecting the evolution of the governance system (formal or informal) in the various countries?
- How do current conflict and political turmoil affect the evolution of institutional arrangements in the Arab region?
- In what ways does the current structure of institutions in the Arab world pose challenges for nationally-driven peace-building and social cohesion? What conditions must be present for transformation to start?

#### **Speakers:**

H.E. Anouar Ben Khelifa, Director General - Presidency of Government, Former Secretary of State in Charge of Governance and Civil Service, Tunisia

Mr. Nadim Shehadi, Director, The Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies at the Fletcher School, Tufts University

Mr. Mouin Rabbani, Senior Fellow, Institute for Palestinian Studies

Mr. Nadwa Al Dawsari, Research and Policy Advisor

*General Discussion*

**11:45 - 12:00**

**Coffee Break**

**12:00 – 13:30**

**Session II: The impact of conflict: Radicalization**

**Chairperson:** Ms. Melanie Cammett, Professor of Government, Harvard University

- What are the drivers of violent extremism and radicalization in the region?
- What is the impact of radical movements on governance and transformation (to peace)?
- What is the role in prevention and response by governance frameworks and institutions (including capacity and appropriateness of current governance models)?

**Speakers:**

Mr. Ibrahim Fraihat, Deputy Director, Brookings Doha Center

Mr. Basil Al-Bustany, Professor of Economics and Finance, International Development Consultant, Economic Development Advisor, Iraq

Mr. Sayyed Sharaf AlMosawi, Head of Bahrain Transparency Society

Mr. Arkan El-Seblani, Chief Technical Advisor, Manager of the Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries, Amman Regional Hub, UNDP

*General Discussion*

**13:30 – 14:30**

**Lunch break**

**14:30 - 16:00**

**Session III: Transformations in the Arab region: Lessons learned from international and regional experiences**

**Chairperson:** H.E. Anouar Ben Khelifa, Director General - Presidency of Government, Former Secretary of State in Charge of Governance and Civil Service in Tunisia

What are the lessons learned on supporting governance reform within peacebuilding efforts?

- What is the role of civil society, state institutions and non-state (armed) actors?
- How can the role of national dialogue ensure incremental reform as opposed to revolution? How can a balance between national and external actors be attained?
- What are the linkages between inclusive political processes, accountability and social cohesion, and how can these be strengthened?
- What sort of steps can peace-seeking actors take to reduce uncertainty, vulnerability, distrust, information asymmetries, and commitment problems?

**Speakers:**

Ms. Malin Herwig, Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding, Programme Advisor for Arab States, Regional Hub, UNDP Amman

Mr. Yasar Al-Qatarneh, Founding Co-Director, Arab Initiative for Conflict Transformation

Mr. Karam Karam, Director, Common Space Initiative

Mr. Achim Wennmann, Researcher, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP), Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

**16:00 - 16:45**

**Coffee Break**

**16:45 -18:00**

**Session III (continued): Transformations in the Arab region: Lessons learned from international and regional experiences**

**Speakers:**

Mr. Ramzi Nuzha, Former Jordan Anti Corruption Board Member, Anti Corruption Expert, Legal Adviser

Mr. Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute

Mr. Ziad Abdel Sammad, Director, Arab NGO Network for Development

## **Day Two: 02 December 2015**

**9:00 - 11:00**

### **Session IV: A Governance and Institutional Framework for Transformation in the Arab region**

**Chairperson:** Mr. Rami Khoury, Senior Fellow, IFI, American University of Beirut

- What are the state institutions that ensure a possible transformation out of protracted crises? What are the “priority” institutions that merit focus and particular support?
- How can institutions become more inclusive, effective, accountable, adaptable and fair?
- How will these institutions (vital for peace) work together to ensure sustainable transformation towards peace?
- What are the infrastructural needs for states to achieve an institutional reform? What complementary measures should be taken and by whom?

**Speakers:**

Mr. Yezid Sayigh, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut

Ms. Natasha Ezrow, Senior Lecturer, Department of Government, University of Essex

Ms. Melanie Cammett, Professor of Government, Harvard University

Mr. Khalil Gebara, International Affairs Advisor, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, Lebanon

**11:00 – 11:20**

**Coffee Break**

**11:20 – 13:20**

### **Session V: Building Blocks for Transformation to Peace: Towards a Monitoring Framework**

**Chairperson:** Ms. Malin Herwig, Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding, Programme Advisor for Arab States, Regional Hub, UNDP Amman

- What are the potential peace enablers for the conflict affected countries in the Arab region?
- How do we ensure that institutional reforms support peacebuilding and are conflict sensitive?
- How do we establish context specific benchmarks of peace enablers and measure their progress on priority issues such as social cohesion, safety and security (conflict mitigation), inclusiveness and participation, justice and reconciliation.
- How to best utilize existing data sources? How do we strengthen national capacities to identify gaps and support effective monitoring?
- In a context of changing societal landscape, who are the stakeholders and partners? What level of engagement should be explored?

**Speakers:**

Ms. Valentina Calderon Mejia, First Economic Affairs Officer, UN ESCWA and Mr. Fernando Cantu Bezaldua, First Economic Affairs Officer

Mr. Hafed Al-Ghwell, Senior fellow, Atlantic Council- Rafic Hariri Centre for the Middle East

Ms. Nahla Yassine-Hamdan, Wayne State University

Mr. Mohamad El Dahshan, Economist, African Development Bank - Nonresident Fellow, Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy

**13:20 – 14:30**

**Lunch Break**

**14:30 - 16:30**

**Session VI: Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and Conflict: Implications for Future Research and Programming on the Arab Region**

**Chairperson:** Mr. Adib Nehmeh, Regional Advisor, ESCWA

**Speakers:**

Ms. Asya El Meehy, Governance and Public Administration Officer, UN ESCWA

Mrs. Marwa Daoudy, Assistant Professor in International Relations, Georgetown University

Mr. Youssef Sawani, Professor of Politics and International Relations, Tripoli University

Mr. Abdel Hamid Elias Abuhis, Assistant Professor, Head, Research, Training and Consultancy Unit, Development Studies and Research Institute University of Khartoum

**16:30 - 17:00**

**Closing**