

- Attending WG Members: LAS, UNEP, UNFPA, UNICEF, R-UNDG, UNDP-Regional Hub, UN-Habitat, WFP, UNIDO and WHO.
- Chair/Secretariat: ESCWA
- Observer: RCNYO

Action Points

- Members of the RCM WG agreed to the following actions by **20 February 2017**:
 - Share written comments on the draft agenda of the 2017 forum;
 - Express interest in leading one of the three panels on day 2;
 - Send suggestions on substantive contributions to the sessions of the forum, in particular to panels on day 2 focusing on poverty eradication. Contributions could be in a format of presentations, reports or side events;
 - Reconfirm the members of the 2030 Working Group – Only ONE Focal Point and one Alternate per agency;
 - Submit nominations for the Scientific Committee. Those to be covered by ESCWA should inform the WG secretariat by **13 February** at the latest.
 - Save the date of the planned Scientific Committee meeting – 27th Feb 2017 at the UN House in Beirut;
 - Share 3-4 key messages that the RCM members would like to highlight during the forum and see included in its final outcome report.

Welcome and background (ESCWA – Ramla Khalidi)

- The RCM plays an important role in operationalizing regional mandates vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda;
- The objective of the virtual meeting of the WG is to initiating a discussion of the concept and agenda of the 2017 AFSD, which is expected to take place in early May 2017;
- Based on the outcomes of the first meeting of the RCM WG on the 2030 Agenda in Cairo in September 2016, and the 22nd Meeting of the RCM in Qatar in December 2016, ESCWA recalled the agreement to set up two Committees to prepare the 2017 AFSD, namely, an Organizational Committee on practical arrangements and a Scientific Committee to oversee the substantive aspects.

ESCWA Update and Agenda for the AFSD 2017 (ESCWA – Karima El Korri)

- A briefing on the 2016 AFSD was provided noting that it was a multi-stakeholder event that attracted around 150 governmental and non-governmental participants from 16 Arab countries and 18 UN agencies in addition to LAS. The fact that it took place during the inaugural year of the 2030 Agenda served to enable key stakeholders to better understand the new transformative agenda and its components and to explore means to translate ambitious commitments by Member States to concrete action at the national and regional level;
- The date for the 2017 session of the forum (3-5 May 2017) was chosen so that it does not overlap with Arab Sustainable Development Week (14-18 May 2017) and sessions of other regional forums, to allow HQ representatives to attend, and to meet the deadline for the submission of the AFSD report to the HLPF. ESCWA is currently approaching Morocco as a potential host country;
- The draft agenda was built to take into considerations the following:

- The theme of the 2017 HLPF to be **‘Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world’** and the goals to be reviewed **in depth**, globally, in 2017 are **Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14, with Goal 17** to be reviewed annually.
- The agenda of the forum was prepared with a view to focus on country experiences and the global theme while considering regional issues and promoting the regional dimension. The first day of the forum is very much dedicated to country experiences and country perspectives including the VNRs (Voluntary National Reviews – this year by Jordan and Qatar). The forum does not focus on goal-by-goal reporting but rather the theme for 2017, which is of high relevance in the Arab region.
- ESCWA focused the discussion on the panels planned for the 2nd day, highlighting the following:
 - The forum will look at the topic of poverty and prosperity using an integrated nexus approach.
 - The second day will be organized in a Davos-style format, with the UN taking a back seat: contributing to the substance including leading the development of background papers, facilitating discussions, identifying speakers and experts, etc.
 - Small subcommittees for each of the three panels could be formed and led by WG members, with substantive contributions from interested WG members.
- The Scientific Committee will be set up as a decision making body to consider proposals and substantive contributions. On this issue, a face-to-face meeting of the scientific committee in Beirut on 27th February was proposed. It was also clarified that agencies making substantive contribution, especially those with an interest in leading one of the panels, should be part of the Forum can be part of the Scientific Committee.
- The idea of holding side events was explored noting that these events would offer an opportunity to discuss individual goals and issues that cannot be incorporated into the plenary sessions.
- WG members were encouraged to share 3 – 4 key messages of their agency on the Theme of the Forum that they would like to be reflected in the Outcome report to be presented to the HLPF.

Discussion

UNFPA (Karen Daduryan)

- UNFPA noted the importance of bringing the population perspective to the agenda of the forum and making sure that issues are not discussed in silos. UNFPA recommended to ask the participants about the side events they are interested in. As for the proposed scientific committee, UNFPA requested information on its terms of reference and nomination process.

UNICEF (Arthur Van Diesen)

- UNICEF advised on further narrowing down the topics of the agenda in order to focus the discussions during the forum and reach specific recommendations in terms of the way forward and to take stock of data gaps as well. Given that we are still in early days of the 2030 Agenda, UNICEF recommended to also take stock of data gaps and to start thinking of linking the outcome of the forum to the Arab Poverty Report, prepared jointly by ESCWA, LAS and UNICEF.

WHO (Rayana Bou-Haka)

- WHO noted that the meeting is divided into two distinctive parts, namely, stocktaking and thematic discussions on the themes of poverty and prosperity across sectors, and suggested to better link the VNR and country sessions on the first day to the second day. Avoiding to look at issues in silos is also important. It was also mentioned that there should be a wider communication strategy related to the Forum (not limited to decision makers). As stated, it is important to ensure that stakeholders who may not speak on the panels can also deliver their messages. This could be accomplished though providing the possibility of presenting posters,

infographics, etc. WHO also noted the use of ICT and technology stating that it could be a crosscutting issue. As for side events, WHO would be interested to have a side-event on investing in health. In addition, WHO requested information on the follow-up modality after the meeting of the scientific committee from a process perspective, noting that the World Health Assembly will be held in May.

LAS (Nada El Agizy)

- LAS recommended including an overview of the Arab Poverty Report during the forum. LAS has established a special department on refugees and migration which could be involved in the Scientific Committee. LAS provided a briefing on the planned Arab Sustainable Development Week (14-18 May) noting that everyone was encouraged to participate. The event will include a conference on food security and water, organized by the WB and FAO, and a whole day on the experience of Egypt. LAS will be sending a template for the plenary sessions shortly and would welcome a presentation of the outcomes of the Forum during the Week.

UNIDO (Giovanna Ceglie)

- UNIDO proposed to introduce a focus on the productive sector in the session on inclusive growth and decent work, including the role of SMEs and the importance of local economic development. She also called for specific attention to the role of the private sector.

UN-Habitat (Dyfed Aubrey)

- UN-Habitat recommended focusing the issues to be discussed at the forum to poverty and prosperity to ensure that the discussions are not too broad. He also suggested having a session on each goal, dealing with data gaps and challenges related to each goal.

UNDP-Regional Hub (Nathalie Bouche)

- UNDP focused on the importance of maximizing country representation in the sessions of the 1st day. She also recommended addressing the issue of multidimensional poverty, thus ensuring a comprehensive approach to the subject matter noting that it may be better to address the notion of youth and women's economic empowerment instead of merely focusing on unemployment.

WFP (Louise Barber)

- WFP is mostly interested in social protection and the issue of refugees. It recommended moving session 6 forward to the beginning of the second day as it provides the overall context in which development efforts are taking place in a majority of countries.

FAO (David Sedik) *by email after the meeting as the connection was bad*

- FAO Regional Office for NENA reiterated their interest in regional follow-up and review, and sent written comments on the proposed AFSD-2017 draft agenda. There was a suggestion to link the panels to the most relevant SDGs. For instance, "poverty and prosperity" bring to mind SDG 1 (poverty) as well as whatever goals lead to prosperity, such as SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities), as well as SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). He also proposed a tighter focus as the current proposed themes under each panel are too many and risk making the discussions too open.

ESCWA

- VNR countries will be reporting on all goals rather than focusing only on poverty and prosperity (theme of the 2017 HLPF). Egypt and Morocco, which reported last year, might also want to present their experiences at the meeting. The choice of countries is based on learning from

experience and preparing for future VNRs. The door should not be closed to other (non-VNR) countries, which want to share experiences or challenges.

- ESCWA envisages a Davos-style format for 2nd day with a number of panelists from different backgrounds.
- Regarding the sessions of the 2nd day, the focus and prioritization is important. Multidimensional poverty should be addressed.
- As for reporting on separate goals, ESCWA stated that the challenge lies in having the required data to prepare brief reviews. Custodian agencies could lead on preparing side events on specific goals set to be reviewed this year. A decision on whether a session on each of the goals will be organized will be made based on the interest of custodian UN agencies.
- ESCWA noted the importance of knowing who the focal points are for each of the Agencies. Some have as many as 2-3 focal points for the working group. It would be important, for the sake of continuity, to have one focal point and one alternate.
- On the issue of the use of technology, ESCWA noted that the third day of the forum would be specifically on the Means of Implementation. This could be used to discuss FFD, science, technology and innovation, data, trade, partnerships and monitoring etc.
- In preparation for the AFSD, ESCWA mentioned that it would be organizing a preparatory civil society meeting (most probably on the theme of this year's forum), and that a concept note will be shared with RCM members as soon as it is ready. ESCWA welcomes expressions of interest from WG members and reiterated the need to update the WG matrix of events accordingly.
- The role of the members of the Scientific Committee would be to take the lead on specific sessions and prepare background notes, identify speakers, and sharpen up the substance.
- ESCWA proposed that the WG should meet once a month until May, virtually or face to face. In between there will also be communication in smaller groups in-between these meetings and ESCWA is happy to coordinate the overall process.
- ESCWA has some limited funding to cover the costs of up to 5 WG members to participate in the Scientific Committee meeting planned to take place in Beirut on 27th Feb 2017.