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## **The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) – Arab States**

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**Draft Meeting Report**

**First Meeting of the RCM Working Group on the 2030 Agenda**

25 September 2016

WHO-EMRO Headquarters, Cairo

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## Background

The RCM Working Group on the 2030 Agenda (WG 2030A), established during the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in Cairo in November 2015 held an initial meeting on the margins of the 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) in May 2016. It was agreed then that the WG 2030A would meet later in the year. WHO-EMRO kindly proposed to host a meeting on 25 September 2016 in Cairo, Egypt, and coordinated its organization with the WG 2030A chair, UN-ESCWA.

This first formal meeting of the WG 2030A aimed to discuss the modalities and means to operationalize the agreed Terms of Reference, building on the collective recognition of UN entities operating at the regional level to join efforts and identify key areas for collaborative action and enhanced partnership.

The discussions were triggered by opening statements by WHO, ESCWA and UNDG, followed by a number of presentations highlighting the regional dimension of the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda; regional approaches to integrated development planning; and a concrete example from WHO on health-related goals and targets and means to identify priorities and roll-out implementation in a thematically-focused yet integrated way. The findings of the survey carried out by ESCWA to map regional strategies and ongoing and upcoming activities of the members of the WG 2030A were also presented at the meeting in an effort to identify opportunities to enhance joint planning, scale up coordination, and strengthen advocacy and awareness on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets in the Arab region.

With such an ambitious task at hand, and starting from the following common principle that:

*“the 2030 Agenda demands a UN system where each part – normative and operational; resident and non-resident; programmatic and support – contributes its specialized expertise, skills and assets towards a shared goal in a coherent and complementary manner. In an enhanced culture of collaboration, each entity will contribute according to its strengths across the 17 indivisible goals in a transparent and accountable way to deliver shared UN results in support of Member States at global, regional and country levels. Joint work should be prioritized where it has greatest impact with due appreciation of agency mandates and expertise and with mutual recognition of respective contributions.<sup>1</sup>”*

the members of the WG 2030A focused on the importance of bridging and integrating the efforts at the national and regional levels to address the complex development challenges facing the region, and support the achievement of the SDGs. The sessions of this one-day meeting also focused on the need for a collaborative identification of regional priority entry points, in particular in relation to governance, institutional capacity, policy-making processes, monitoring and follow-up, while bearing in mind the importance of peace and security as an enabler of development.

## Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: the regional dimension

The regional dimension was discussed in light of the ongoing efforts to ensure that the UN system is fit and ready to support its Member States in translating commitments to action and results. It was highlighted as an important feedback mechanism which acts as a bridge between processes and collective initiatives at global and national levels. The discussion noted that problems and their potential solutions could not be reduced to universal development templates, but rather addressed through a context-specific approach. RCM members recommended strengthening regional and sub-regional platforms and mechanisms by exploring possible new ways to enable coherent, effective and efficient system-wide support, in particular in relation to trans-border,

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<sup>1</sup>CEB common principles to guide the UN system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (27 April 2016)

intra-regional and cross-regional issues. The regional dimension is meant to leverage the internal UN system-wide collaboration with other regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental actors, such as civil society networks, academic institutions, foundations, think-tanks, and the private sector.

The members of the WG 2030A agreed on the need to work together and coordinate better on activities related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They also noted the importance of enhancing RCM – UNDG synergies and collaboration. While UNDG supports the national level interventions, the RCM must work on the cross-border and regional issues that cannot be addressed on a national level, such as water, international migration, forced displacement, trade and transportation among others. Working at the regional level will also allow the UN entities to complement country-level work and support progress on more sensitive issues such as governance, institutional building, partnership with non-state actors, etc.

## **The 2030 Agenda: Working together at the regional level**

The results of the short questionnaire developed by ESCWA in its capacity as chair of the WG 2030A were presented and discussed, with members' interventions complementing the collected information. The purpose of the exercise was to map the main regional activities planned in 2016 and 2017, enhance knowledge of the members of the WG 2030A of their nature, objectives and main focus areas, and explore avenues for collaboration. As per the ToRs, four main tracks were identified to help the WG members engage in a dialogue on potential joint activities: regional consensus building; knowledge and research; capacity building; and advocacy.

This mapping exercise and its findings triggered a general positive response, with some participants suggesting that it should be kept as a living document, to be updated as new activities are planned and partnerships formed. The members of the WG 2030A recommended that a Plan of Action be developed along three key areas, namely, Research and Knowledge Products, Regional Consultations and Meetings, Capacity Building and Advisory Services. It was agreed that the Advocacy and Awareness Raising component would be mainstreamed in activities under the other areas.

## **The SDGs: Integration for effective implementation**

The discussion built on lessons learnt from the MDGs era, where the absence of integration across sectors resulted in fragmented policies and diverging outcomes. In an effort to enhance the collective awareness of the importance of addressing the 17 SDGs as package of inter-connected development targets, ESCWA presented a nexus approach based on the integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs, and their relevance to key challenges and needs of the region.

The purpose of the nexus approach is to provide policy makers with a practical methodology and tools and to better assess synergies and trade-offs across SDG goals and targets and to outline a practical approach to integrated policy making in the Arab region. Based on a thorough mapping of the 17 goals and 169 targets indicating that more than half of the SDG targets make explicit reference to at least one other goal, ESCWA identified three nexus as entry points to its own future work, namely, the Water – Energy – Food Security Nexus, the Poverty – Decent Work – Sustainable Growth Nexus and the Equality – Inclusion – Justice Nexus. The aim of this presentation was to show the practical benefits of this approach in highlighting cross-sectoral interactions, facilitating integrated planning and decision-making, and informing the efficient allocation of resources between competing needs.

A more sector-specific yet integrated approach was presented by WHO-EMRO. Their initial response to the new development agenda has consisted in screening health-related goals, targets and indicators, classifying interactions, mapping out connections and identifying priorities for the region. This exercise has revealed the multidimensional nature and complexity of the targets under SDG3, and highlighted universal health coverage as the core target which underpins the achievement of most other health targets. It has, according to WHO,

provided the organization with an entry point to identifying effective mechanisms for strengthening multi-sectoral action for health, developing targeted strategies and action plans, revisiting the way WHO interacts with non-health government sectors, and scaling up its advocacy and awareness raising as well as monitoring and reporting.

The discussion among the members of the WG 2030A emphasized the importance of moving to a new way of doing business, anchored in the principles of the Transforming Our World Declaration and the complex nature of the SDGs. They also discussed the need to develop effective tools to assist Member States in adopting the SDGs into their national plans and to design targeted capacity building activities at the regional and national level.

Given the regional mandates of most participating agencies, the discussions also addressed the RCM's role in developing regional strategies and action plans to address regional challenges. There was a consensus on the need to join efforts to develop different tools and methodologies that support countries in integrated planning. The nexus approach was flagged as one way of understanding the relationship between the targets, including dependencies, correlations and trade-offs, and consequently a key to priority setting and resource allocation.

## **The Way Forward**

During the last session of the meeting, participants engaged in a roundtable discussion on the way forward, by reflecting on previous outputs where joint planning, substantive contributions and multi agency engagement set an example for future collaboration. Past joint knowledge outputs, such as the 2015 Arab Sustainable Development Report and the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (2014, 2015 and 2016) were discussed as examples where the members of the RCM worked collaboratively.

It was agreed that the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development could also serve as an incentive for the members of the RCM to contribute to enriching the dialogue among Member States and various stakeholders, share knowledge and experiences, and showcase achievements in their areas of expertise. The possibility of organizing side events and special sessions and selecting the target audience accordingly was also discussed. The example of the work of UNFPA-led task force on population indicators was mentioned both as a potential input to the forum and or topic for a dedicated session.

It was also agreed that a framework for collaboration would be developed in the form of a matrix listing upcoming activities (based on the mapping exercise) and providing room for agencies, in smaller or larger groups, to agree on roles and responsibilities, and their substantive and financial implications.

Future meetings of the WG 2030A will be planned in a way which ensures relevance, effectiveness and coherence with other related events, including the upcoming RCM Meeting, the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and meetings of the RCM Working Group on Data and Statistics.

An initial proposal for a framework of collaboration is available in Annex1.

## Annex 1: The RCM Working Group on the 2030 Agenda DRAFT Plan of Action

Note: Activities to be retained in this Plan of Action must meet the following criteria:

1. Be regional in nature;
2. Fall under one of the 4 categories of the proposed Plan of Action ;
3. Be a collaborative effort between at least two or more RCM members
4. Be directly relevant to the 2030 Agenda.

Research and Knowledge Products	Activities	Lead Entity	Partners	Relevance to the 2030 Agenda	Status / Year
	Flagship regional “Panorama” report on State of Food Insecurity (SOFI)	FAO	-	Provide an annual update as part of the Monitoring and Reporting of the SDGs, especially SDG2	Planned
	Migration governance framework	IOM	-	Focus on Migration related targets, especially Target 10.7.	Under Implementation
	Development of an Institutional and Coordination Mechanism tool to provide information on how countries have established new or adapted their existing institutional framework to implement the 2030 Agenda, in a way that fosters horizontal (inter-sectoral) and vertical policy coherence	UNDP	-	Provide a tool to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda	Under Implementation (under finalization)
	Using the analyzed environmentally-related SDG targets as a tool to initiate discussions through UNEP Focal Points on the integrated approach	UNEP	-	Focus on the integrated approach to development to implement the 2030 Agenda	Under Implementation
	Using the analyzed environmentally-related SDG targets to support the prioritization of targets at the national level	UNEP	-	Support the prioritization of targets at the national level	Planned
	Arab Sustainable Development Report	ESCWA		Regional Report summarizing progress presented to AFSD and HLPF	Planned 2018
	Development of a methodology for SDG target screening and relationship mapping to identify targeted synergies and trade-offs and propose policy interventions	ESCWA	-	Identify trade-offs and synergies in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda	Under Implementation
	“Progress for Children in MENA’ report	UNICEF	-	Drawing a baseline against the child-focused SDGs	Planned
	Arab Poverty Report	ESCWA,	UNICEF	Focus on SDG 1 and 8	2017
	Regional flagship publication on gender and the SDGs	UN-Women	-	Focus on SDG 5	Planned
Research studies on the SDGs	WFP	-	Focus on climate change and the linkages with food security (SDGs 2 and 13)	Under Implementation	

Regional Consultations and Meetings	Activities	Lead Entity	Partners	Relevance to the 2030 Agenda	Status / Year
	Joint Committee on Food Security (CFS) side event	FAO	IFPRI, World Bank, LAS, WFP, others	Focus on SDGs implementation, especially SDG2	Under implementation
	Regional Multi Stakeholder Forum on Food Security and Nutrition	FAO	LAS, WFP, IFAD, CFS Secretariat	Provide a roadmap for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs with focus on SDG2	Planned
	Regional Symposium on Migration Governance and the SDGs	IOM	-	Focus on the migration aspect of the SDGs in the Arab region	2016-2017
	Activity on SDGs for financial institutions in the Arab World and Africa	LAS	African Union (AU)	-	2017
	Activity on SDGs for Parliamentarians in the Arab World and Africa	LAS	AU	-	2017
	Meeting to exchange success stories and lessons learned on the SDGs and initiate a capacity building program between the two regions	LAS	Summit of South American-Arab Countries	Exchange success stories and lessons learnt on the SDGs	Planned
	Arab Forum for Sustainable Development	ESCWA,	LAS, other RCM members	Focus on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development implementation and Follow up and Review	April 2017
	Regional Parliamentary Forum titled “Succeeding the SDGs Challenge, in the Arab region, through Parliamentary Action: Lessons learned and innovative mechanisms”	UNDP	-	-	October 2016
	The first joint Ministerial Meeting of Ministers of Health and Environment	UNEP	WHO	Study synergies between health and environment for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda	December 2016
	Media and Business Forum on Sustainable Development	UNEP	-	Address the role of media and private sector in delivering on the environmental dimension of the SDGs	April 2017
	Support the planning of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban development (AMFHUD)	UN-Habitat ROAS	LAS	Focus on SDG11	2017
	The third Arab Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction	UNISDR	-	Focus on building resilience to disasters in the context of sustainable development	March 2017
	Baseline indicators to monitor Women Status and SDGs in the Arab Region for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	UN-ESCWA	LAS, UN-Women	Focus on women and SDGs	October 2016
	Follow up meeting to the SDG and gender conference	UN-Women	UNDP, AWO, LAS.	Focus on women and SDGs	December 2016
	Meeting on Health and the SDGs in the EMR	WHO	-	Focus on health and the SDGs	Planned
	Regional initiative during the last quarter of 2016 for school meals and school feeding programmes in MENA	WFP	With partners	-	Last quarter of 2016
Regional multi-stakeholder event on SDG2 in the region	WFP	FAO, IFAD, the Committee for Food Security	Focus on SDG 2	2017	

Capacity Building and Advisory Services	Activities	Lead Entity	Partners	Relevance to the 2030 Agenda	Status / Year
	Initiative on Small Scale Family farming & evidence based programming for developing capacities and competitiveness of Producer Organizations and cooperatives	FAO	-	-	Under Implementation
	Sub-regional cooperation on fisheries, aquaculture and oceanographic research	FAO	-	-	Under Implementation
	Capacity building activities in relation to methodologies related to assessment of food loss (Goal 12) and Gender and Agriculture	FAO	-	Focus on SDG 12	Under Implementation
	Regional ILO/ITC training titled “Implementing the SDGs in the Arab states: Promoting Inclusive Sustainable Growth and Decent Work”	ILO	ITC, ESCWA	Focus on SDG 1 and 8	5-8 December 2016
	Training on SDGs and multi-dimensional poverty for Arab member States and LAS secretariat and specialized organization staff	ESCWA	LAS	Focus on SDG 1 and 8	31 Oct-3 Nov 2016
	Capacity building programme on SDGs	LAS	South American States	-	Planned
	Treaty Bodies Capacity Building programme	OHCHR-ROMENA	HQ-supported	-	Under Implementation
	Training material on the components of the 2030 Agenda and on approaches to its implementation and FUR in the Arab region	ESCWA	-	Focus on the implementation & FUR	Under Implementation
	Training workshops on common issues, cross-border challenges of key thematic areas upon the request of member States	ESCWA	-	Focus on the implementation & FUR	Under Implementation
	Capacity development initiatives on the SDG/ICPD related indicators	UNFPA	ESCWA, LAS		Planned
	Mapping the key implementation and monitoring challenges including institutional arrangements, data sources and needs facing countries in implementation and monitoring ICPD based SDGs	UNFPA	-	Focus on ICPD based SDGs	Planned
	Regional SDG workshop for government and statistical services to operationalize the SDG/ICPD review and reporting mechanism at country level, as well as guide the integration of relevant indicators into the regional review and reporting mechanisms	UNFPA	-	Focus on ICPD based SDGs	October 2016
	City Leader’s Guide on Migration, the UN-Habitat Public Space Toolkit, guidelines on National Urban Policies as well as UN-Habitat’s City and Neighborhood Profiling Tools for cities in crises available in Arabic	UN-Habitat ROAS	-	-	By end of 2017
	Establish an integrated system for capacity building and human development in the field of housing and urban development at the local, national and regional levels through the Arab Urban Observatories in the region	UN-Habitat ROAS	LAS	-	Planned
	Workshops to raise awareness and exchange knowledge and lessons learnt related to the urban-related SDGs	UN-Habitat ROAS	LAS	Focus urban related SDGs	Planned
	Capacity building and training workshops on SDGs, and train Arab countries on the Global Education and Training Institute (GETI)’s material in Arabic	UNISDR	GETI	11 countries already trained	Under Implementation



	Develop and institutionalize disaster loss database in trained Arab countries	UNISDR	GETI		Under Implementation
<b>Advocacy and Awareness Raising</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Lead Entity</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Relevance to the 2030 Agenda</b>	<b>Status / Year</b>
	World Food Day event and highlight of the SDGs	FAO	-	-	Annually
	Establish advocacy campaigns and awareness raising through activities such as the Regional Forum, seminars, meetings, launch events, etc.	ESCWA	-	Focus on the components of the 2030 Agenda and on its implementation and Follow Up and Review	Under Implementation
	Prepare a weekly segment on SDGs broadcast on the State-run TV.	ESCWA	UNIC - Lebanon	Focus on the different SDGs	Under Implementation
	Include advocacy campaigns on the SDGs in the biennial Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban development	UN-Habitat ROAS	-	-	Under Implementation
	Raise awareness of issues of urban development in the Habitat III Regional Report for the Arab Region and Habitat III Secretariat	UN-Habitat ROAS	ESCWA	-	Planned
	Raise awareness about positive urban change during the World Urban Campaign (WUC) in order to achieve green, productive, safe, healthy, inclusive, and well planned cities	UN-Habitat ROAS	currently 136 partners and networks from around the world	-	Under Implementation
	Launch a 7-year Advocacy Campaign on the 7 targets of Sendai Framework for DRR starting with 2016 focus on reducing mortality from disasters	UNISDR	-	-	Under Implementation
	Ensures that all the advocacy messages, web stories and communication material clearly highlights the linkages between disaster risk reduction and sustainable development agenda	UNISDR	-	-	Under Implementation
	OHCHR staff awareness on the 2030 Agenda	OHCHR	ESCWA	-	2 November 2016
	Raise awareness among Institutions of Higher Learning through the MOST programme	UNESCO	ESCWA		
Corporate Strategic Communication Strategy	WFP		Support the communication aspects of the strategic objectives that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda.	Under Implementation	

## Annex 2: Meeting List of Participants – RCM WG on the 2030 Agenda

25 September 2016

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