

Meeting of the RCM on the sidelines of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

Rabat, Morocco

8:00 to 9:00 am on 5 May 2017

Meeting Agenda:

1. Tour de Table about the key messages of Forum
2. Proposed TORs of new regional Sub-group on Country Support (UNDP and UNE)
3. Review of Overall Architecture of Inter-Agency work on 2030 Agenda (ESCWA draft discussion paper)

Key Messages of Forum

The meeting was opened by Ms. Khawla Mattar, Acting Executive Secretary of UN ESCWA. Ms. Mattar explained that a draft of the Arab Forum report, which will be presented to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in July 2017 by the Government of Morocco, would be shared with all the participants very soon. Given the tight deadline, however, of 30 May to submit to Conference Services in NY, agencies may have only 2-3 days to review the draft and send their comments to ESCWA. Ms. Mattar stressed the importance of effective partnership among all those present and looked forward to the LAS Week on Sustainable Development (14-18 May in Cairo) with a focus on effective partnerships. She confirmed that the outcomes of the AFSD will be presented during the LAS Week on SD.

UNDG Sub-group on Country Support

The co-leaders of the proposed R/UNDG Sub-group on SDGs Country Support (UNDP, UNFPA and UNE) briefed the group on the initial meeting of the regional directors/co-chairs which took place on 18th January 2017 to identify key entry-points for support. Group activities are meant to focus on supporting UNCTs within the framework of the UNDG-MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration, Policy Support). This may involve support through inter-agency MAPS missions to support UNCT and governments, support to SDG Country Progress Reports and VNRs. Support may also include mainstreaming of SDGs into UNDAF processes, in line with the new global directives.

First step is a stocktaking exercise to assess past and planned UNCT country-level SDG support including inter-agency support under the various components of the MAPS and the Sub-group is working on a template to that effect. Upon finalization the template will be circulated to UNCTs by the R-UNDG chair. The Group will be open to all UNDG members and will be demand driven.

In the discussion, participants focused on

- a. The lack of and need for a common group reading of SDG priorities at the country level and a space to reflect strategically on the process including the identification of success areas and on focus areas that may need more work and attention. This is something that needs further consideration of both the RCM and the UNDG together. Efforts are currently too scattered as far as country support is concerned. There should be better coordination to show solidarity and shared responsibility, and clearer synergy with the work of the R/UNDG Peer Support Group (PSG). (WFP, FAO, ESCWA, UNAIDS).
- b. There is a need for a platform to guide countries as well as allow those who are able and willing to pledge support. Support to countries goes beyond the MAPS and there is a need to agree together as a group on a common understanding of support by the next Forum (OHCHR, ESCWA, UNAIDS). We have to engage the Arab countries that took part in the preparatory processes for the SDGs more systematically in the discussion to increase ownership (ESCWA). There are a number of unaddressed areas and the countries are asking for different things so it is best to develop sub-groups on specific themes and tools to provide needed support. Future session of the AFSD should consider working sessions and capacity building on these themes and tools (WHO).
- c. The SDGs Sub-Group should also work to avoid the risk of reducing the SDGs to a set of targets. More effort is also needed to support national targets and policies and ensure that the latter reflect the SDGs in order to avoid a two-track scenario with national policies and the SDGs as separate (UNIDO). LAS added that the Committee for Sustainable Development, reporting to the Arab ECOSOC, is in the process of producing a Guiding Framework for SDGs implementation in the Arab region.

Architecture of Inter-Agency work on 2030 Agenda

The common group would not replace specialized subgroups. It would only ensure that all subgroups and taskforces report to one coordination mechanism co-led by RCM and R/UNDG. Envisioned for this mechanism would be:

- One annual meeting of all RCM/UNDG members
- One consolidated work plan (including all the task forces and subgroups)
- One accountability framework

The group called for more integration, with most participants opting for “Option 2” in the proposed draft discussion paper that brings together RCM and UNDG under one 2030 Agenda umbrella with the possibility of specialized task forces. The importance of ensuring inclusiveness at all levels was also noted, with the understanding that this will be given due consideration at the next R/UNDG meeting in Amman in May 2017 (UNIDO, FAO, UNFPA).

Conclusion

ESCWA as the Secretariat for the Forum stressed the inclusive preparatory process of the meeting as a success story. The Secretariat was able to provide generous financial support for this year's Forum, allowing the different agencies to organize and hold individual sessions and specialized events. There is a need, however, to consider the possible financial contributions to be made by the different agencies for the Arab Forum 2018 to allow for a similar broader engagement of the entire RCM/UNDG team in the process, noting this as a significant change for the way the group works together in support of the region and the SDGs.

List of Participants

Agency	Name of Participant
FAO	Mr. Abdessalam Ould Ahmad
ILO	Ms. Shaza G. Jondi
LAS	Ms. Nada El-Agizy
OHCHR	Mr. Abdel Salam Sidahemd
	Mr. Akram Khalifa
UN AIDS	Ms. Yammina Chakkar
UNDP	Ms. Nathalie Bouche
UN Environment	Ms. Melanie Hutchinson
UN ESCWA	Ms. Khawla Mattar
	Ms. Ramla Khalidi
	Mr. Adib Nehmeh
	Ms. Karima El Korri
	Ms. Maisaa Youssef
	Ms. Anne Dalitz
UNFPA	Mr. Luay Shabaneh
	Ms. Hala Youssef
UN Habitat	Ms. Katja Schafer
UNICEF	Mr. Geert Cappelaere
UNIDO	Ms. Giovanna Ceglie
UNOPS	Mr. Usman Akram
UN Women	Ms. Maryse Guimond
WFP	Mr. Carlo Scaramella
WHO	Ms. Rayana Bou-Haka