

# RCM Arab States 2011

## Report on Progress to the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) of the Arab States

25-26 November 2011  
Beirut

### Thematic Working Group on MDGs

#### Working Group Members

Agency	Focal Point
ESCWA (Chair)	Mr Tarek Alami (until 8/2011) Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari (since 9/2011)
UNICEF	Mr. Mr. Pierre Ngom
WHO EMRO	Mr. Mohamed Ali
ITU	Ms. Nefertiti Ali
UNESCO	Mr. Said Belkachla
UNWOMEN	Ms. Maha Al-Nuaimy
UNDP	Mr. Khalid Abu-Ismaïl
UNAIDS	Mr. Hamidreza Setayesh
ILO	Ms. Shaza Al-Jondi
UNFPA	Mr. Abdallah Zoubi
UNEP	Mr. Fouad Abousamra
LAS	Mr. Tarek Nabulsi

# RCM Arab States 2011

## Key Summary of Achievements/Developments in 2010/2011

- Since the 14<sup>th</sup> session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), which was held in Beirut from 11 to 12 November 2010, the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) - with ESCWA as designated to be the convener of this TWG – has successfully launched of *'The Third Arab Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises'* in December 2010.
- The Launch of *"The Third Arab Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises"* (*The Report*) was convened at LAS Secretariat in Cairo, on 12 December 2010 at the opening ceremony of 30<sup>th</sup> session the council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs (12-13 December 2010). The launch was attended by 18 Arab ministers of social affairs, Ms. Amat Al-Alim Sosowa, Assistant Secretary General and Chair of United Nations Regional Development Group, Ms. Marie Simonen, Assistant Secretary General and General Director of UNFPA, in addition to the top management of the UN agencies members of the TWG on MDGs in the Arab region. The launch was also attended by local and international press.
- During their 30<sup>th</sup> session, the council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs discussed the recommendations of *"The Report"* and mainly the cooperation between Arab countries and the UN agencies on the attainment of the MDGs by 2015. The session concluded by a set of decisions related to economic and social development in the Arab region as well a consensus on draft decisions related to MDGs achievement by 2015 that were discussed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arab Social and Economic Summit (Sharm El-Sheikh, 19 January 2011). The summit recognizing the achievements of Arab states, the specialized councils of Arab Ministers, and the UN agencies for attaining the MDGs, called for enhancement and coordination of all efforts to fulfill the gaps and accelerate the achievement of those developmental goals by 2015.
- During the 15<sup>th</sup> RCM, ESCWA on behalf of the TWG presented a follow-up report on its work since the 14<sup>th</sup> RCM. The report included a detailed list of the TWG members activities on MDGs for 2011-2012, those activities will serve in the preparation of the upcoming 2012-2013 Arab MDGs joint (4<sup>th</sup> LAS-UN Arab MDGs) report as decided by the TWG. Moreover, a short briefing on ESCWA's MDG report for 2011 was given.
- The TWG members invited by ESCWA, actively participated in the expert group meeting from 19 to 20 July 2011 on "National and Regional MDGs Priorities for the attainment of

# RCM Arab States 2011

the MDGs in the Arab region" (External Peer Review for the ESCWA's report on "Millennium Development Goals in the Arab region 2010-2011: National and Regional MDGs Priorities".)

- On 20 July 2011, ESCWA organized the 7th meeting of the TWG to coordinate the preparation of the concept note of the upcoming LAS-UN MDGs Report 2012-2013, that identifies gaps, cases where countries experienced retreat/regression in the attainment of MDGs.
  1. During this meeting, the TWG discussed the idea of the 2013 LAS-UN report to be a critical review of the MDG process in the region as per proposition of UNDP representative endorsed by the meeting. It was agreed that the structure of the report contains three parts: a) a short synopsis on data analysis; summary assessment of the current situation/progress; b) an overall evaluation of the MDGs' achievement (what worked and what did not); and c) a proposal/suggested plan for a policy framework for 2015 and beyond.
  2. It has been agreed that a drafting committee (members are: Mr. Adib Nehmeh from ESCWA (nehmeh@un.org), Mr. Khalid Abu Ismail from UNDP (khalid.abu-ismail@undp.org), Mr. Fouad Abousamra from UNEP (fouad.abousamra@unep.org), Mr. Pierre Ngom from UNICEF (pngom@unicef.org) and Mr. Hamidreza Setayesh from UNAIDS (setayeshh@unaids.org)) will prepare a draft concept note for the report and send it to the TWG members for review and comments.
  3. The draft concept note is currently under preparation. ESCWA will be submitting the first draft to the drafting committee based on the outcome of the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the TWG for review and discussion.

## Key Challenges Affecting Implementation

- Tight Deadlines, some agencies believed that more time should be given to them to provide inputs/ comments. **Proposed Action:** provide a timeline for the preparations of the 2012-2013 MDGs report so agencies can plan commitments and prepare inputs
- Coordination among contributing agencies: Late delivery of commitment from some agencies. **Proposed Action:** provide a timeline for the preparations of the 2012-2013 MDGs report so agencies can plan commitments and prepare inputs

# RCM Arab States 2011

- Data issues: accuracy and lack of recent data and information. There was a conflict between data from national sources compared to international ones. **Proposed Action:** LAS will be receiving data to be used by UN agencies and forward them to member countries for review and endorsement before including them in the upcoming report.
- Changing representations of technical members. Some countries and UN agencies kept changing representations, and the suggestion here is to the extent possible have tasked members who could stay throughout the process. **Proposed Actions:** (1) provide a timeline for the preparations of the 2012 -2013 MDGs report so agencies can plan commitments and prepare inputs, (2) agencies provide a focal point and an alternate focal point.
- Working with both languages was an issue: This caused some agencies to spend a substantial amount of time on translating as there are some non- Arab speakers working on the report and other related activities. This is why a decision should be reached on working language for agencies to assign appropriate personnel. **Proposed Action:** further discussion with TWG on whether the working language of the draft should be English and once finalized the draft will be translated into Arabic.

## Amendments to the TWG Workplan

**None [Kindly note that TWG members did not support previous proposal of ESCWA to enlarge the duties of the group beyond the report.]**

## 2011/2012 Workplan Implementation Progress:

No.	Key Activity	Main Output	Status of Implementation
1	LAS-UN joint Arab MDGs report titled " <i>The Fourth Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2012-2013</i> ".	Report produced both in Arabic and English	In preparation
2			

# RCM Arab States 2011

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX A - TWG Meetings

Date	Venue	Details
23 July 2009	Beirut (ESCWA Headquarter)	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of TWG:</u> The meeting was held to discuss and approve the main theme of the "LAS-UN Joint Regional Report on MDGs in the Arab Region, 2009/2010"; the draft Action Plan of the TWG; and the TOR and the budget for the TWG on Arab MDGs.
11 December 2009	Beirut (ESCWA Headquarter)	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of TWG:</u> The meeting was held to discuss the way to proceed in producing the LAS-UN joint MDGs report 2010 by setting deadlines for lead agencies to deliver the second drafts of the MDGs chapters in the report.
10 June 2010	Cairo (LAS Headquarter)	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of TWG:</u> The meeting was held to agree on the way to proceed in producing the LAS-UN joint MDGs after it was discussed at the Senior Officials Meeting of the Arab Ministers Council for Social Affairs (9-10 June 2010)
30 June 2010	Cairo (LAS Headquarter)	<u>4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TWG:</u> The meeting's purpose was to prepare for the discussions on the respective chapters of the report with the ministers during the regular session of the Arab Ministers Council for Social Affairs (LAS Secretariat, Cairo, 30 June 2010) and the way forward after the Ministerial session.
10 November 2010	Beirut (ESCWA Headquarter)	<u>5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TWG:</u> The meeting reviewed the preparations for the 14th RCM in addition to further discuss and elaborate the next steps of the TWG .
12 December 2010	Cairo (LAS Headquarter)	<u>6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TWG:</u> <u>The meeting preceded the launch of the LAS-UN Joint report: 'The Third Arab Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises'</u>
20 July 2011	Beirut (ESCWA Headquarter)	<u>7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the TWG</u> The meeting discussed the preparation for the upcoming 4 <sup>th</sup> Arab MDGs report (2012-2013)

# RCM Arab States 2011

## Meetings of the drafting group of the "The Third Arab Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises"

23 July 2010	Beirut (ESCWA Headquarter)	<p><u>1st meeting of the Drafting group:</u></p> <p>The meeting's purpose was to agree on the responsibilities of the drafting committee and the set the way forward to achieve them.</p>
11 December 2009	Beirut (ESCWA Headquarter)	<p><u>2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Drafting group:</u></p> <p>The meeting was held to discuss how to proceed in the preparations of the LAS-UN joint MDGs report 2010 after the first draft was submitted.</p>
19-24 February 2010	Beirut (ESCWA Headquarter)	<p><u>3rd Meeting of the Drafting Group:</u></p> <p>The purpose of this extensive meeting was to review the revised zero draft chapters prepared by the respective lead agencies and then to consolidate them in order to reach a consistent and coherent zero draft of the report.</p>
11-13 June 2010	Cairo (LAS Headquarter)	<p><u>4th meeting of the drafting committee:</u></p> <p>The meeting was held for the purpose of revising the Arabic draft Report based on the comments received from the Senior Officials Meeting and from the 3rd Meeting of the TWG, and then to agree on the steps to be taken to reach a final draft that will be presented to the upcoming meeting of the Arab Ministers Council for Social Affairs (Cairo, 30 June 2010) for adoption at the Ministerial level</p>
20 June 2010	Teleconference meeting	<p><u>5th meeting of the Drafting Group:</u></p> <p>The meeting was set to discuss the finalization of the final Arabic draft of the report that will be presented in the meeting of the Arab Ministers Council for Social Affairs.</p>
2-3 August 2010	Cairo (UNDP Regional Office)	<p><u>6th meeting of the Drafting Group:</u></p> <p>This meeting was held to finalize the English version of the report after incorporating the necessary modifications to match the Arabic version which was endorsed by the Arab ministers of social affairs.</p>

# RCM Arab States 2011

## ANNEX B - TWG Terms of Reference

### **TOR – Thematic Working Group (TWG) on the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region (As agreed in the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of TWG on 20 July 2009)**

#### **A. Background and rationale**

- ❖ The Millennium Declaration adopted by 191 United Nations Member States in September 2000, represents a global political commitment towards the promotion of sustainable human development, peace and security, human rights, democracy and good governance. The objectives in the Millennium Declaration were subsequently formulated as eight "Millennium Development Goals"<sup>1</sup> (MDGs), to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs aim to free a major portion of humanity from extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease. They established targets for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development (Box 1).

#### **Box 1: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

- ❖ The Secretary General of the United Nations (UNSG) convenes regular meetings for the heads of agencies in order to follow-up on the progress in achieving the MDGs and discuss the technical assistance provided by the various UN agencies to developing countries in order to enable them to achieve the MDGs. Recently a high-level meeting on the MDGs was convened on 25 September 2008 by the UNSG and the President of the General Assembly for world leaders and all development actors to review progress, renew and reinforce commitments, and identify concrete actions and initiatives to ensure that all countries achieve the MDGs by 2015. This meeting resulted in new commitments of participating countries and agencies to meet the MDGs<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ An annual UN report on MDGs has been prepared as the most comprehensive global assessment of progress to date, based on data provided by a large number of international organizations within and outside the United Nations system. The latest UN report was produced in 2009 less than one month ago<sup>3</sup>. The report shows that the right policies and actions, backed by adequate funding and strong political commitment, can yield results. The report also notes many

<sup>1</sup> "United Nations Millennium Development Goals" <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009, UN, New York, 2009

# RCM Arab States 2011

challenges remain and are likely to become even more difficult in the current economic climate. The numbers of people going hungry and living in extreme poverty are much larger than they would have been had progress continued uninterrupted.

- ❖ At the regional level, a number of reports with a regional focus on the MDGs have been issued by the United Nations agencies in cooperation with other international and regional organizations, among those reports, is the LAS-UN Joint Report on the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region. The latest was produced in 2007.
- ❖ The Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM), convened by the UN Regional Commissions, was established pursuant to ECOSOC Resolution 1998/46, to promote a coordinated approach by the UN agencies and relevant regional organizations to address development issues of concerns to their respective regions. The RCM for the West Asia region is convened by UN ESCWA, and attended by almost all UN organization operating in the region along with the League of Arab States (LAS). The latest of such meetings was the 12<sup>th</sup> RCM meeting held under the auspices of the UN Deputy Secretary General in Beirut 13-14 September 2008. More than 20 UN agencies and the LAS attended this meeting. The 12<sup>th</sup> RCM agreed that more effective inter-agency coordination and collaboration at the operational level can be achieved through establishing thematic working groups for priority themes identified by RCM for the region. For the Arab region, the 12<sup>th</sup> RCM agreed to establish three Thematic Working Groups (TWG) and their convening agencies as follows:

Thematic Working Group on MDGs (Convener: ESCWA)

Thematic Working Group on Food Crisis (Convener: FAO)

Thematic Working Group on Climate Change (Convener: UNEP)

## **B. Objectives of the TWG on Arab MDGs**

The main objectives of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Arab Region (TWG on Arab MDGs) are to:

- ❖ Coordinate the production of a high quality, analysis-based, coherent and consistent flagship publication entitled "LAS-UN Joint Regional Report on the attainment of the MDGs in the Arab Region" (the Arab MDGs Report).
- ❖ Ensure that the Arab MDGs Report will properly address its major objectives to (a) Track the attainment of the MDGs by the various Arab countries, (b) Identify and analyze the major successes and failures in the attainment of MDGs and the main reasons for both instances, (c) Propose policy recommendations to the Arab countries and the region as a whole that will accelerate the attainment of the MDGs, and (d) Offer practical suggestions on what and how the UN system organizations and the LAS can assist the Arab countries to accelerate the attainment of the MDGs in the Arab region.

# RCM Arab States 2011

- ❖ Review emerging global issues such as the International Financial Crisis (IFC), and assess the challenges and implications on achieving the MDGs in the Arab region.
- ❖ Cooperate and collaborate on other related activities that would more effectively assist the Arab countries in accelerating the attainment of the MDGs.

## **C. Scope of Work and Elements of Collaboration**

In order to achieve its major objectives, the TWG on Arab MDGs will undertake the following tasks:

- ❖ Agree on the proposed major themes of the "LAS-UN Joint Regional Report on the Attainment of MDGs in the Arab Region".
- ❖ Agree on an action plan for the TWG on Arab MDGs including the specific substantive contribution of each agency to the production of the joint LAS-UN Report on Arab MDGs, the financial contribution to the budget and the timetable of achievements and other activities.
- ❖ Provide an overview and reflect on the state of global affairs including the current financial and economic crisis and its impacts on the attainment of MDGs in the Arab region particularly on the financial, economic, social and political aspects in the region.
- ❖ Share among members of the TWG on Arab MDGs the reports, research and policy notes, analytical studies and guiding tools conducted and/or developed by the respective agencies with specific attention to the Arab region and sub-regions.
- ❖ Plan joint projects and activities based on capacity needs assessments.

## **D. Membership and Mode of Operation**

- ❖ The TWG on Arab MDGs will be composed of representatives of member agencies of the UN System working in the region and the LAS. Each agency will nominate a representative who is preferably well appraised and involved at the technical and operational level in the agency's MDGs activities.
- ❖ Meetings of the WG will be held regularly at least once a year and whenever is necessary. UNESCWA, as the convening agency, will call for such meetings normally at the UN house in Beirut. UNESCWA will hence take care of the logistics of the meetings. Each agency will cover its own participation. Hosting of the meetings at other duty stations, however, will be open to all agencies members of the TWG on Arab MDGS. In such cases the host of the meeting will take care of the logistics.
- ❖ Meetings and communication among members of the TWG, can take place via telephone/video conferences, Skype or other IT means.

# RCM Arab States 2011

- ❖ The TWG on Arab MDGs may invite experts or officials as the need arise for policy brief or specialized technical advisory services.

## **E. Reporting**

- ❖ Reports of the TWG on Arab MDGs will be submitted to the RCM convener, UNESCWA, and to all agencies that are members of the TWG.

UNESCWA will exert additional efforts to achieve wider dissemination of the reports to relevant stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels.