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REPORT**ARAB REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS ON THE POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
BEIRUT, 14 MARCH 2013****Summary**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held a regional consultative meeting of civil society organizations on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda at the United Nations House in Beirut, 14 March 2013, in collaboration with the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND). The meeting was attended by representatives of civil society organizations in a number of Arab countries, namely Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Yemen, in addition to representatives of the League of Arab States, a number of United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

The aim of the meeting was to identify and discuss the views of civil society on regional priorities that should be included within the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, possible ways for its participation in the implementation and monitoring of the agenda, and coordination mechanisms between civil society and the United Nations for this purpose. The discussions resulted in the announcement of recommendations made by a group of Arab civil society organizations on the development framework beyond 2015. The recommendations called for the adoption of a comprehensive development approach during the formulation of the agenda, taking into account the political, social, economic, environmental, and cultural rights of citizens. It also called for the adoption of a new citizen-focused development paradigm, which gives priority to the issues of governance and policy coherence for development, and captures the link between achieving development at the national level and addressing development failures at the global level. The participants proposed the inclusion of a number of topics within the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, including the reinforcement of participatory governance, social justice, the principle of equity, and social solidarity, in addition to a distinct goal related to ending the occupation and ensuring the freedom of individuals and nations.

This report examines key issues and recommendations discussed at the meeting, and provides a summary of the interventions made.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) gives great importance to the participatory approach, in accordance with a set of conventions and resolutions issued in this regard on the international and regional levels. This topic has been included in its programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of social development, and as a priority in order to develop a comprehensive and unified vision of the concept of participatory development and its mechanisms, and in support of a real partnership in decision-making between civil society and governments. Among the topics of focus for ESCWA in this regard are: enhancing knowledge frameworks, supporting coordination mechanisms and networks, activating participation at various levels and through various means, supporting efforts to launch a national dialogue that includes all parties, consensus-building, and facilitating the process of democratic transition in countries that have witnessed popular movements. As part of this commitment, ESCWA [is set to] issue a series of references and technical material; organize training activities, meetings, and seminars; and provide technical support services and technical advice.
2. The regional consultative meeting of civil society organizations was held to discuss the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. The aim of the meeting is to involve civil society in the preparation process of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, and to allow the various civil society organizations and United Nations agencies working in the social field in the region to offer their views on the agenda. The direct objective of the meeting is to provide a set of recommendations within the context of a declaration discussed at the 18th meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for Arab States (Beirut, 15 March 2013). The declaration was also made at a meeting of a high-level panel overseeing the United Nations post-2015 development agenda held in Indonesia in the same month.
3. The meeting was held in preparation for the participation of civil society in the 68th session of the General Assembly to be held in September 2013, where the United Nations Secretary-General will offer his vision on the post-2015 development agenda. Such participation will allow civil society representatives to present their views on the agenda and contribute to its formulation in the presence of a wide range of national, regional, and international participants.
4. This report contains a summary of the themes of the meeting, the interventions of participants under each theme, and the approved recommendations.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

5. At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants approved a declaration by Arab civil society organizations on the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, the text of which is as follows:

Declaration of Civil Society Organizations from the Arab Region on the Post-2015 Framework

General background

1. In the year 2000, the Millennium Declaration (MD) put forward a set of challenges to global development efforts that outlined a “collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality, and equity at the global level”. The Millennium Declaration called for global policies and measures to address the needs of developing countries and economies in transition so that all could benefit from the positive effects of globalization. It contained a statement of values, principles and objectives for the international development agenda for the 21st century. Most importantly, the MD established a strong link between peace, security, democracy, respect of human rights and development efforts seeking to achieve social justice, eradicate poverty, and create employment.

2. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that followed were a set of negotiated, specific and measurable targets that focused on poverty, hunger, unemployment, education, health and infectious diseases, the status of women and the environment. The goals were mainly addressed to developing countries, while they included one goal (Goal 8) that addressed global collective cooperation to achieve the first seven goals. This 8th goal focused on global partnerships for development and aimed to advance an open and rule-based trading and financial system, address the needs of least developed countries, and deal comprehensively with the debt of developing countries. Furthermore, it entailed cooperation with pharmaceutical companies and the private sector so as to provide access to affordable and essential drugs and to make available the benefits of new technologies to developing countries.
3. The MDGs include quantitative targets and objectives that are easy to comprehend. The good intentions of the MDGs are hard to disagree with. However, the accountability of the international community and national governments in their implementation has been limited. As a result, the MDGs did not serve the larger strategic purpose of achieving sustainable development and addressing interlinked global challenges such as “eradicating poverty, ensuring environmental sustainability, achieving economic equity, ensuring gender equality, tackling climate change, building resilience, managing equitable distribution of natural resources, realizing human rights, and reducing inequality between and within populations”.
4. Conceptually, the MDGs present a desired outcome but do not outline the policy and process needed to achieve such outcomes. The MDGs do not fully consider the diverse positions that different countries are starting from in their developmental pathways. Moreover, the MDGs are laid out in terms of aggregates and averages that often conceal distributional outcomes. This poses a number of questions about the different goals including the effectiveness of the role of global partnership for development (Goal 8). For example, the intentions of this goal to provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries is undermined by the specificities of cooperating with pharmaceutical companies, precisely those that prohibit anyone from calling their abusive monopoly into question. Similarly, the intention to make available the benefits of new technologies in developing countries is conditioned by cooperation with the private sector that is often not interested in less than competitive pricing. Last but not least, Goal 8 calls for dealing comprehensively with the mounting debts of developing countries, though there is no guidance on the tools with which to go about such a process and within what framework.
5. The MDGs are also set out in proportions, such as “half the number of people”, and they address a number of critical human development issues such as literacy and the preservation of biodiversity. However, some of the indicators are inappropriate or misleading, and their formulation reveals the ways in which the MDGs have been misunderstood, misused and misappropriated. For instance, goal in the MDGs, “Promote gender equality and empower women”, does not include indicators signifying progress. Economic empowerment without reproductive rights and the corresponding health care will leave women as less than full citizens. Furthermore, educating females without protecting them from sexual harassment and gender based violence will hinder girls and women from fully utilizing their educational qualifications. Similarly the MDGs emphasize increases in the rate of economic growth yet do not include policies or measures for redistribution of assets that would ensure that the poor can benefit from such growth.
6. The outbreak of the global crisis, in its multiple dimensions, financial, economic, climate, energy and food prices, revealed the imbalance in the nature of the existing global trading and financial system. It became clear the extent to which the available systems were geared toward the enrichment of a select few on the global market at the expense of the larger portion of the population. More critically, it highlighted once more that achieving the goals is not just a matter of funding and commitments but also an issue of patterns and policies at the macro-economic,

financial and social development levels. In this sense it emphasized the need to return to the underlying principles of the Millennium Declaration as a conceptual framework of analysis that sought to identify the linkages between different sets of challenges and their impact on development.

The developmental picture in the Arab region

7. As for the Arab Region, whilst the global development agenda was focused on the remaining five years of the MDGs, citizens in Arab countries took to the streets to say that the current economic and political systems had failed them. Popularly labeled the “Arab Spring”, these uprisings deposed a number of presidents in some countries and led to civil conflict in others. Demands by Arab citizens focused on dignity, participation and social justice. In other words, Arab citizens were calling for an end to all forms of exclusion; be it economic, political, social or cultural. Development, they stated, cannot take place without freedom of individuals and of nations particularly in a region that is still suffering from the longest occupation in modern history. The continued Israeli occupation of Palestine and its expansionist settler policies has had tremendous and devastating impact on peace, stability and development in Palestine and surrounding countries.
8. These demands also demonstrated the extent to which the neo-liberal development models implemented under the undemocratic regimes of the Arab region had effectively produced poverty, inequality and unemployment; this despite some promising indicators in some of those same countries in rates of economic growth and the achievement of the MDGs. Indeed, the economies of Arab countries’ adopted models of growth that neglected developmental objectives and peoples’ economic and social rights. Policy makers prioritized integration in the global economy through trade and investment liberalization, borrowing, expansion of privatization deals and public-private partnerships, and overall economic deregulation. Most countries achieved economic growth; however poverty, unemployment, and inequities grew dramatically. Markets were not working the way they should and the relevant political system was not correcting these failures.
9. Most of the countries in the region are facing multifaceted challenges particularly the imperative to move from a rentier model of governance toward a democratic and productive state. This can only take place if governance is based on the respect of human rights, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, integrity and responsibility. The transition toward such a state needs to consider the rights and responsibilities of citizenship a key pillar and focus on the empowerment of citizens, by enhancing knowledge as one of the top priorities, gender equality, equity and justice.
10. Finally, such a state would by necessity be based on a new social contract promoting participation, enhancing competitiveness, adopting policies for fair redistribution of wealth and resources and providing all the necessary public services with a good quality.
11. In this regard, this statement, issued during the Arab regional CSO consultation, outlines the priorities they have identified for the post-2015 development framework. These build on the new emerging challenges mentioned above and the lessons learnt from the initial MDGs process’ failures and gaps.

Recommendations by civil society organizations in the Arab region to the post-2015 framework

1. *Conceptual framework*
 - **The post-2015 development framework should be based on the main overview suggested by the Millennium Declaration. The MD** underlined the positive link between peace and security

and democratic governance at all levels, including the global, regional, national and local, with efforts to realize social justice. As such it is imperative to reiterate this link in the post-2015 agenda as a key element of its conceptual framework and adopt the necessary themes, goals and plans for implementation.

- **The post-2015 development framework must be based on a comprehensive approach to development that takes political, social, economic, environmental and cultural rights into account.** Over the past few decades, economic growth has been taken by some as an indicator of development. As the Arab uprisings and the Occupy Wall Street movements have shown, economic growth does not necessarily lead to development. A more comprehensive approach to growth is needed; one that is inclusive and redistributive and ensures that the elements of this growth benefit all of society.
- **Following from the above, the post-2015 Agenda should be based on a new citizen centered development paradigm:** The central role given to economic growth within development must be set aside. The post-2015 agenda must adopt a multidimensional and comprehensive approach. In this regard, we need new economic priorities based on productive sectors that **generate sustainable and decent jobs and a reconsideration of the regulatory role of the State**, which is mainly entitled to protect the rights of citizens, shaping policies focused on fair redistribution, including through taxation and the provision of services. The post-2015 framework must adopt a **new social contract between citizens and the State based on the human rights framework and protection of citizenship**. Furthermore, the development agenda should promote different objectives of national economics and a move away from growth-led policies and export-led growth towards the creation of sustainable productive sectors with an added value and jobs in agriculture, services, tourism, manufacturing and other key sectors in order to build productive societies. This necessitates the protection of the needed “policy space” that allows for the elaboration of national strategies, the adoption of macro-economic choices and the possibility of implementing them according to national needs and priorities.
- **The post-2015 agenda must create coherence between the implemented policies and the principles of human rights and democracy.** The respect of human rights and democracy is critical for the success of the developmental efforts and to reach the goals; it is thus imperative that the framework, agenda, policies and goals of the post-2015 agenda are fully coherent with the human rights framework.
- **The post-2015 agenda must tackle governance at the global level. As the most recent financial crisis indicated,** the challenges faced in global governance must be prioritized in the post-2015 framework in order to make it more transparent, democratic and participatory. This requires revising the global macroeconomic policy framework, including the Bretton Woods institutions, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, the current global financial architecture ought to be reformed towards more fiscal regulations securing control over capital volatility and mobility. Democratization of global governance must aim at enhancing the participation of developing countries in the decision making and the promotion of the mutual accountability with efficient and effective access to information. Democratic global governance should be based on the core principles of equal participation and common and differential responsibility.
- **The main focus of the debate should shift from merely setting new goals and targets for post-2015 towards the analysis of key issues and means of implementation to tackle them.** The MDGs over-simplified the discussion on development framework as the goals and targets set were not incorporated within a broader development framework. Therefore, we need to shift focus from thinking of new sets of numerical targets towards designing the goals and objectives to capture the various critical conditions and different enabling environments. Now that **the need**

to shift from goal-focused development is clear, tracking quantitative trends accompanied by qualitative analysis is also essential. Furthermore, the priority issues selected for post-2015 should entail a clear statement of the problem with thorough analysis of its root causes from a multi-dimensional perspective, as well as addressing related challenges. This should be further strengthened with clear and time-lined action plans and means of implementation.

2. *Process to the post-2015*

- **The implementation of the post-2015 agenda should be much more inclusive while adopting a bottom-up approach to development.** The post-2015 process should be participatory, multilateral and inclusive of all involved in promoting development. Developing countries of the South should have a similar proactive engagement as that of industrial countries. The process should be inter-governmental, involve all stakeholders and address the demands of civil society in a sound and comprehensive manner, whereby the mechanisms should be transparent, consultative and take into account the aspirations and needs of the all citizens including those who suffer from poverty, unemployment and climate change.

3. *The structure of the framework*

- **The post-2015 agenda should focus on the need to elaborate and adopt national agendas based on the national priorities and the protection of the basic rights of the citizens.** The national agenda defining the priorities and the strategies to protect human rights must be the result of an inclusive national dialogue including the different groups namely the business sectors, trade, labour, farmer and professional unions, civil society organizations, think-tanks, research centres, academia, women and youth movements besides others.
- **The post-2015 agenda should promote and enhance the efforts leading to the regional cooperation and coordination.** Regional cooperation is a prerequisite to face the challenges of the integration into the global economy. It ought to establish sound mechanisms for conflict resolution and peace keeping. It should also create the efficient system for the fair redistribution of wealth and natural resources, namely water, oil and gas. Last but not least, regional coordination must establish the relevant rules and regulations for the economic cooperation.
- The post-2015 goals should allow for **structural flexibility at the national level.** There is some interdependence among objectives. Thus, the new framework should consider that **development objectives are a norm rather than floor or a ceiling.**
- It must also be explicitly stated that the post-2015 development framework represents **objectives for the world as a whole**, which are not a scale to measure progress in every country because **national goals must be formulated domestically**, with the use of global norms as a point of reference.
- **Inequalities must be analyzed in any assessment of outcomes.** Within the post-2015 framework, it is necessary to monitor progress by introducing some weights that reflect the distribution among people. Despite the promising achievements of the MDGs, it is clear that the progress is uneven within and across countries on the geographic, social, economic and gender levels. **Combating chronic inequalities within and between countries** must be a priority in the agenda through the promotion of economic systems built on equitable redistribution.
- **The post-2015 agenda must capture the linkages between achieving development nationally and addressing systemic failures globally and must ensure policy coherence for development.** This necessitates the implementation of the targets included in the Goal 8 whilst taking into account their respect for internationally accepted instruments of human rights, which

is the clear expression of the global partnership. Achieving the developmental goals goes beyond focusing on development aid to also look at the impacts of key policy areas such as trade, agriculture, fisheries, security on development prospects.

- **Ground the framework in the intergovernmental processes and mechanisms of monitoring and accountability of the existing international human rights instruments.** One of the vital issues that must be addressed in the post-2015 process is the question of accountability. The lack of accountability mechanisms in the MDGs framework necessitates grounding this framework within the existing international human rights instruments such as UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, core human rights treaties including International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and human rights monitoring mechanisms including universal periodic reviews to ensure accountability. The post-2015 development agenda should include mechanisms for monitoring the commitment and implementation of the said development agenda.

4. *Thematic issues/goals to be included in the post-2015 agenda*

- **From Rentier toward a Developmental State.** States must be held accountable for their systems of governance. The post-2015 agenda should allow for clear targets for the move toward developmental and democratic states. This is particularly important for the Arab region where international support for previous dictatorships critically undermined development initiatives. For the post-2015 agenda, this could include revisiting existing social contracts and rethinking the roles and responsibilities of states and citizens alike.
- **An End of Occupation should be a distinct goal of the post-2015 agenda.** The Arab region is suffering from the longest foreign occupation in modern history where a clear system of racial and religious discrimination has been put in place. This is not only a clear violation of the international law and of covenants on peace, security and human rights but it also a violation of the right to development. The post-2015 development agenda should include a clear goal with regards to the “right to self-determination” as outlined in the MD and the end to occupation that includes a time bound agenda and targets for its achievement.
- **Freedom of individuals and of nations on the political and socioeconomic fronts to realize their aspirations and potential should be a clear goal of the post-2015 agenda.** Without freedom there can be no development as the Arab uprisings have shown. The realization of such freedom requires a number of measures on the political and economic front.

On the political front, it includes the enjoyment of all political, economic, social and cultural rights. Policies, benchmarks and goal posts for the realization of such rights should be formulated with a time bound agenda for their achievement.

On the economic front, this implies having a supportive financial system (financial stability, oriented to real economy, serve needs of small producers and consumers), global macro-economic coordination and policies supportive of development, non-speculative commodity market, a development-oriented trading system, sharing of and affordable access to technology and knowledge, and a fair and participatory global economic governance.

With regard to trade, the global trading system should become development-oriented. The development agenda ought to consider the country-specificities of developing countries and their right to develop as well as to follow the suit of developed countries in the path taken and tools implemented to reach the levels of development they have reached today. Furthermore, the demands of developed country for increasing trade competitiveness and further trade integration should be aligned with a periodic assessment of the implications of existing trade agreements and

upcoming ones on the economic and social fronts. Finally, it is essential that trade agreements between developed and developing countries include as a benchmark the right of policy space. Through this policy space, developing countries can create policies that support the revival of their economies in terms of producing employment and development as well as minimizing potential negative spillovers that may result from further liberalization.

- **The post-2015 agenda should promote participatory frameworks of governance.** As the popular unrest that has swept cities globally indicates, citizens and civil society organizations are demanding their right to participate at all levels of decision-making. This entails the recognition of civil society as a key partner in identifying issues, policies and goals and in the implementation of the agendas; that is mainstreaming participatory processes at various levels of policy making including the provision of access to information and other channels. In turn, this implies an overhaul of current systems of governance. Clear mechanisms for implementing such policies with bench marks for their measurement and achievement must be part of the new development framework.
- **Equity and social justice rather than the reduction of poverty should be a central goal for the post-2015 Agenda.** Focus on poverty reduction has shifted attention from larger questions of equity and justice while economic growth has been used as an indicator of development. At the same time, numerous studies are now pointing to the fact that the richest 20 per cent of individuals are benefiting from 70 per cent of world income while the poorest 20 per cent benefit less than 1 per cent of world income. As such, the post-2015 development agenda should focus on growth with distributional mechanisms that ensure that the benefits of such growth reach all levels of society. Furthermore, patterns of inequity are not limited to income, but also include geographic, ethnic, religious and gender based biases that present a clear hindrance to development. The post-2015 agenda should present an in-depth analysis of such multidimensional inequities and include policies, goals and benchmarks for eradicating them.
- **Maintaining social cohesion. Many countries across the world are facing considerable social instability whether as a result of economic inequities, transitions to democracy or historic injustices.** The post-2015 agenda should include clear policy prescriptions for the maintenance of social cohesion including the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms where needed.
- **The specific conditions of the least developed countries (LDCs) should be addressed in a systematic manner, given that many LDCs suffer from considerable challenges in terms of governance, underdevelopment, acute levels of poverty and food insecurity, internal and external conflicts and widespread corruption among other issues.** This includes a commitment to institution building, facilitation of trade agreements, debt forgiveness and commitment to support peaceful dialogues and to not arm warring factions.
- **The rights of refugees and displaced should be clarified and upheld.** This includes the rights of Palestinian refugees; the largest population to be in refugee status in contemporary history as well as the rights of those displaced a result of wars and economic hardships. The post-2015 agenda should include clear benchmarks for governments in terms of the just treatment of both refugees and internally displaced populations. It should also encourage countries of origin to facilitate the return of refugees and the displaced to their areas of origin.
- **The post-2015 agenda should address gender inequality within the transformation of the development model itself:** The MDGs framework reduced gender inequalities to simplistic targets without taking into account the larger policy nexus to eradicate such discrimination. Thus, the post-2015 agenda needs to move from the mere mainstreaming of gender equality, to gender equity as central to any new development paradigm and not a mere byproduct of certain policies focused on numerical goals.

- **The post-2015 agenda should be an opportunity to address the deficits in knowledge acquired or a move from quantitative to qualitative measures.** Current efforts to improve education are focusing on quantitative and numeric goals while the challenge is to improve knowledge including reforming the educational systems and curricula, promoting research and development skills and initiatives at different levels and in both the humanities and the sciences. It also should include concerted efforts to close the digital gap within and between countries and regions.
 - **Clear and solid commitment to ensure sources of finance for development must be ensured within the post-2015 framework:** Although the global recession and economic crisis affect both developed and developing countries, the real commitment of the developed countries to ensuring sufficient sources of finances, including 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) as Official Development Assistance is critical within post-2015 framework. This should be accompanied with genuine respect to commitments agreed in Accra and Bussan.
12. Finally, Arab civil society organizations, through the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), will continue to coordinate and work together with ESCWA on the road to Post-2015 to ensure a genuine participatory process and engage Arab civil society effectively in its consultations.

II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A. AN OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

6. Mr. Frederico Neto, director of the Social Development Division at ESCWA, gave a presentation entitled “United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda: The role of ESCWA in regional and international initiatives”. The presentation identified the various regional and international consultation mechanisms aimed at developing a post-2015 development agenda. He referred to a group of high-level task forces/working groups and networks concerned with the formulation of the development plan and all related frameworks, reports, and technical support. He highlighted the contribution of ESCWA in the reports prepared by each of the high-level task forces concerned with the post-2015 development agenda, and the open-ended working group concerned with preparation for the sustainable development goals, in addition to the role of ESCWA in organizing and supporting Arab regional consultations. ESCWA has gathered the views of the various stakeholders, particularly civil society organizations, and continued coordination with the United Nations development programs to enhance integration of consultations.

7. The presentation highlighted lessons learned in relation to the MDGs, namely maintaining the approved measurement indicators, as well as focusing on and activating human development by achieving policy coherence and respect for the specificities and special context of each country. The presentation addressed a range of global challenges being witnessed in the Arab region, most notably the chronic lack of equality, food insecurity, worsening environmental problems, the spread of violence and conflict, rampant corruption, the weakness of the state and absence of the rule of law, the emergence of the youth segment, and the rise of migration and aging. The presentation provided a comprehensive vision for the future of the region and the world, based on a set of economic, social, humanitarian, and environmental principles, which fall within an integrated and harmonious framework that links between environmental sustainability, integrated economic development, human security, and integrated social development. These goals are all designed to achieve a better future for all based on the principles of equality, sustainability, and human rights. In conclusion, the presentation noted the role of the various task forces concerned with the post-2015 development agenda, especially those involved in the formulation of the joint report of the United Nations regional commissions. It also referred to the main recommendations of the report, which call for generating new job opportunities; adopting a more effective approach to address inequality; adopting a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability; and paying due attention to democratic rule.

8. Mr. Adel Abdellatif, chief of the Regional Programme Division in UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States, gave an intervention including a brief overview of the MDGs and the challenges faced by countries in achieving and monitoring these goals. Mr. Abdellatif presented the "My World" [survey] launched by the United Nations Development Programme, which invites users to [vote for six out] of 16 priorities for the future development agenda and participate directly in determining the MDGs. According to the results of the vote, education was identified as a main priority in developed countries; followed by job creation in developing countries; then issues related to health, food security, and democratic governance in developed countries compared to issues related to security, civil peace, dialogue and consensus-building in developing countries. The presentation pointed out to initiatives undertaken by some states, which added goals of their own to the MDGs, such as fighting corruption and raising the poverty line to over US\$1 per day. This indicates the ability of states to commit to achieving more ambitious goals that may help to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development for all. The presentation closed with an emphasis on the important role of civil society in ensuring the accountability of decision-makers and actors involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other international and national initiatives.

9. Ziad Abdel Samad, executive director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), noted the opportunity for Arab civil society to participate in regional and international consultations to develop the UN post-2015 development agenda, and express its views, needs, and aspirations for achieving comprehensive and integrated development. He stressed on the eighth goal of the Millennium Development goals. He focused on the eighth goal of the MDGs, which calls for the commitment of industrialized countries to mobilize capabilities and support efforts to achieve development and equity, fight poverty, and establish the principles of fair trade, which reinforce the development efforts, improve the productive capacities of developing countries, and contribute to the creation of sustainable and decent jobs for all. He underlined the importance of enhancing international cooperation and international aid as a basis of any new development framework and keystone within the post-2015 development agenda.

10. Abdel Samad also referred to the issue of sovereign debt defaults, which has burdened countries and prevented their achievement of the MDGs. He stressed the importance of transfer of knowledge and technology, and [harnessing] intellectual property rights. He called for a commitment to [achieve these goals] within the post-2015 development agenda, and to establish effective mechanisms for their implementation. He stressed the need to include the issue of social justice, equality, and equity within the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. He noted that most countries in the Arab region are rentier states on the political, economic, and social levels, and have non-productive economies, which calls for laying the groundwork for building productive democratic civil states, based on a new social contract between the citizen and the state, centered on the principles of human rights, participation, citizenship, and accountability.

11. He emphasized the need to include the issue of foreign occupation, and the social, economic, and security barriers it causes in the region within the proposed post-2015 development plan. He stressed the role of regional cooperation as a tool to meet the challenges of joining the global system, and an alternative to a full dependence on foreign relations. Abdel Samad underlined the importance of implementing the decisions of international summits on developing countries in terms of building modern states, resolving conflicts without foreign intervention, facilitating accession to the global trading system, and obtaining pledged aid without any conditions. He pointed out to the existing and ongoing discrimination between sexes, which has undermined the development achievements made over the past decades. He noted the importance of reinforcing the role of women in development initiatives, calling for a transition to a qualitative stage characterized by a greater participation by civil society as a real and essential partner in the development process.

B. VIEWS AND ECHOES FROM THE ARAB REGION: POSITIONS OF ARAB
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

12. Obaid al-Braiki, director of the Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Labor Organizations in the Arab World, gave a presentation entitled “Reading of Arab Revolutions and Development Prospects”. The presentation highlighted the concept of development versus growth, and stressed the need for the new development framework to be based on a joint assessment of the active forces in establishing the development process, following up on its [progress], and determining its policies in the region, most notably [by] the United Nations. He discussed the main reasons for the outbreak of Arab revolutions in the past years, including the failure of economic reforms adopted since the nineties in creating jobs and securing social services; the high unemployment rate among the youth; the insufficiency of social protection and social assistance programs; increasing cases of exclusion and marginalization; unstable business relations; the absence of dialogue; the spread of violence and control over the decisions of trade union organizations; and rampant financial and administrative corruption. The presentation also touched on the results and contradictions produced by the Arab revolutions, such as the failure of national dialogues and lack of credibility; the divergence between governments and their peoples on one hand, and governments and traditional and modern trade union organizations on another hand; and the constant disagreement within international organizations and among foreign governments as to supporting change or maintaining the current regimes due to the influence of economic factors with social and political implications.

13. The presentation covered the main elements of the new development framework, which includes revisiting the role of the state; ensuring social protection; adopting a fair policy on wages and distribution of wealth; protecting public and individual freedoms; supporting social dialogue away from all forms of hegemony, guardianship, and exclusion; and establishing supreme councils concerned with discussing and following up on the various pillars of development. He proposed the formulation of a new social contract free from any forms of exclusion and marginalization, one that is characterized by a vital and effective role of civil society organizations and trade unions, especially those concerned with economic choices, public and individual freedoms, and with democracy as a prerequisite for the achievement of social justice and equality. Braiki referred to a range of challenges facing the Arab region, most notably the lack of freedom, the deterioration of the economic and security situation and lack of security, and the continuation of governments to promote a wrong concept of dialogue restricted within a purely political framework. The presentation concluded the need to promote effective dialogue between stakeholders, one that addresses the social and civic components of development, not just the political ones, in order to formulate an integrated development framework based on the principle of freedom, democracy, and social justice.

14. Ezzedine al-Asbahi, founding director of the Human Rights Information and Training Center (HRITC) in Taiz-Yemen gave a brief presentation about the transformation being witnessed by civil society in Yemen since the outbreak of the revolution, its increasing role and functions, the challenges it faces, and its contribution to the national dialogue and in identifying new priorities that help to strengthen Yemen socially, economically, and politically. On the challenges facing the Arab street in general and Yemeni civil society in particular, Asbahi noted that the common development priorities that emerged from the Arab uprisings are the achievement of democracy, freedom, and social justice, which requires the adoption of policies of fairness, equality, and freedom, not only the development of indicators of poverty. The presentation highlighted a set of recommendations that must be implemented in order to achieve fair and continuous development; fight corruption and establish the rule of law and good governance; maintain stability and security; and limit internal conflicts to avoid the export of violence to neighboring countries. He stressed the importance of addressing the increasing economic downturn in Yemen in light of the discrepancy between the amounts of foreign aid allocated to the country and those received, the need to combat terrorism within a legitimate and clear legal framework, and of developing the skills of civil society and its capacity to cope with change and transition to democracy.

C. THE CONTRIBUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

15. Maha Yahya, chief of ESCWA Social Participatory Development Section of the Social Development Division, gave a presentation emphasizing the role of Arab civil society in achieving the post-2015 development agenda, namely in offering new ideas on the content of the plan; acquiring lessons and the best practices from the implementation of the MDGs; participating in the development of a comprehensive model for economic, social, and political development based on the rights of peoples without discrimination. Yahya stressed the proactive role that could be played by civil society organizations in monitoring the implementation of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda; holding accountable the stakeholders involved in its implementation; promoting the implementation of human rights conventions and safeguarding the rights of citizens; contributing to the drafting of a new social contract; participating in various regional and international consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. In this context, the presentation focused on the need for Arab civil society to join international alliances and civil society groups; to network with the private sector, trade unions, and local authorities; and communicate with all segments of society, namely the youth and marginalized groups, and fulfill their aspirations and ambitions within the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.

16. The presentation touched on a range of challenges facing Arab civil society as a result of the faltering global economy, the worsening climate crisis, the rise of poverty and inequality, and the need to address the political transformations in Arab countries. The presentation focused on the biggest challenge, which is the emergence of internal and external attempts to undermine the transition towards democracy in order to protect the interests of previous regimes. The presentation shed light on the absence of economic stability and the weak system of social policy; the rise of violence, insecurity, extremism; and political, economic, and social consequences of the occupation and colonial policies based on apartheid. Accordingly, the presentation stressed the need to establish solid foundations to maintain social cohesion, support systems of transitional justice and democratic governance, and to address the results of internal and external forced displacement in some Arab countries such as Sudan, Iraq and Palestine from a human rights perspective, not only a humanitarian one. Finally, the presentation highlighted the role played by ESCWA in the regional consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, by facilitating the consultation process between various parties, mobilizing the commitment of states and stakeholders to participate in the implementation of the agenda, promoting an effective exchange of information and expertise, and referring the recommendations issued by the consultative meeting to the meeting of the high-level Panel concerned with the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda and the 18th meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for the Arab States (Beirut, 15 March 2013).

17. Salah Eddin Jorshi, media personality, political researcher and president of Al Jahedh Forum in Tunisia, stressed that the Arab world became more complex after the revolutions after the exposure of the “deceitful” prevailing development pattern, the fake numbers and percentages that conceal comprehensive structural corruption as was the case in Tunisia. Despite the progress made on the MDGs, it is often limited, even distorted, as is the situation in Libya. Jorshi pointed out to the potential proactive role of Arab civil societies, which are becoming a parallel and effective force, which requires believing in them and providing the necessary support for their development. He also noted the important role of civil society in Tunisia and Egypt, which acts as a safeguard for unions concerned with the creation and implementation of policies, for the media, and the process of drafting a new constitution, protection of women's rights, and addressing inequality and social disparities.

18. The presentation stressed the need to revisit and activate the Millennium Declaration more than the MDGs, in order to constitute a comprehensive development vision based on the principle of rights and freedoms, as well as to enhance dialogue on policies. It emphasized the need to adopt a new development approach, which establishes a strong relationship between freedom and justice, and is not limited to addressing the problem of poverty and gender inequality, but also focuses on the system that produces poverty and the environment that contributes to the spread of discrimination against women. The

presentation called for adopting a new development approach commensurate with the post-revolutions transition taking place in some Arab countries, an approach that would achieve political stability and justice, establish security, lay the foundations for good governance and a strong state, and lead to the development of consensual mechanisms that would pave the way for establishing an effective and democratic system. This requires a strong belief in the principle of democracy, a respect for freedoms and rights, and international support that takes into account national specificities. The presentation concluded with a set of recommendations focusing on the importance of developing a new strategy for civil societies for the post-revolution period, and finding more effective participation mechanisms, especially given the change in the balance of power, which requires associating development with the principle of democracy, and linking the MDGs to human rights, while taking into account the national context of each country and adopting human rights-based mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the MDGs.

19. At the closing session, the participants discussed the content of the draft declaration of civil society organizations, which was distributed to the participants to deliberate on its components, and agree on recommendations aimed at establishing a new development framework and strategy beyond 2015, to be implemented, monitored, and followed up on with the participation of civil society.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. PLACE AND DATE OF MEETING

20. The Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) for civil society organizations was held at the United Nations House in Beirut, 14 March 2013.

B. OPENING

21. At the opening session of the meeting, Dr. Nadim Khouri, deputy of ESCWA Executive Secretary Ms. Rima Khalaf, gave a welcome speech. He praised the development efforts made by civil society organizations, and their role as an essential partner in creating any future development strategy and achieving stability, participation, and sustainable development. Khoury invited the attendees to share their thoughts, consistent with the concern of ESCWA to hear their views in order to achieve the main objective of the meeting, which is to support the course of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. In this context, he emphasized the integration of the developmental priorities of ESCWA with the aspirations of Arab civil society in the field of development, and its commitment to be an effective partner in support of the efforts of civil society to promote participation, achieve social justice, and build new development frameworks and values based on respect for human rights.

22. He pointed to the challenges facing the Arab region and Arab civil society, namely the quest to avoid the repercussions of global challenges such as the faltering economy, the worsening climate crisis, the growing poverty rates, the widening social gap, as well as the need to address the political shifts being witnessed in Arab countries as a result of the popular uprisings. Khoury stressed the need to intensify efforts and cooperation to meet these challenges, support the process of transitioning to peaceful democracy, and achieve a stable and democratic rule, which encourages participation, supports the true foundations of citizenship, and ensures even distribution of wealth and balanced development. He also called on Arab civil society to follow the best practices and draw lessons from the Millennium Development Goals to reach a comprehensive approach to economic, social, and political development; guarantee the rights of citizens without any discrimination; and safeguard the rights of women. Khoury concluded by affirming ESCWA's commitment to the creation of a permanent forum for civil society to express its views and concerns, calling for its participation in the formulation of a new development framework, and in the follow-up and monitoring of its implementation process.

23. Ziad Abdel Samad, executive director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), stressed the importance of encouraging civil society organizations to develop their own vision with regards to the

Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, and allowing these organizations to present their proposals and recommendations in the meeting of the high-level Panel concerned with the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, in coordination with the relevant UN agencies. Speaking about the failures of Arab countries in implementing the MDGs, and the worsening social and economic problems that led to the outbreak of revolutions in some Arab countries, Abdel Samad emphasized the need for Arab countries to transition from rentier states to modern and productive states, which ensure the peaceful participation of citizens; support public freedoms, human rights, and the rule of law and justice; and work to bridge the gap between development policies and approaches. He also stressed the need to consider the establishment of a new, sustainable development paradigm based on human rights, which reinforces political freedom and participation, the principle of equity and justice, and a fair distribution of wealth. He noted the importance of strengthening international cooperation to achieve sustainable development in the context of a development-oriented trading system, to exchange knowledge and technology, adopt policies and financing systems [based on] international assistance, and protect intellectual property rights. Finally, Abdel Samad underlined the need to adopt an international policy that extends beyond the development and funding of purely developmental goals to addressing the problems facing the international system and international policies in force.

24. The meeting included interventions by experts from a range of United Nations agencies and civil society organizations on the topics of discussion. This was followed by a discussion among the participants aimed at identifying the views and priorities of civil society regarding the framework of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the means that would enable it to contribute to the implementation and monitoring of this plan. The meeting focused on three main themes, namely the course of the United Nations post-2015 development agenda; the positions of Arab civil society organizations on it; and the contribution of these organizations in the effective and comprehensive development and implementation of the agenda.

C. ATTENDANCE

25. The meeting was attended by representatives of a group of civil society organizations in several Arab countries, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. It was also attended by a representative of the League of Arab States, and representatives of a number of United Nations agencies in the region and other international organizations. The annex to this report contains a list of the names of participants in the meeting.

D. AGENDA

26. The meeting agenda included the following main items:

1. The course of the United Nations Post-2015 development agenda;
2. Views and echoes from the Arab region: Positions of Arab non-governmental organizations;
3. The contribution of civil society organizations in the United Nations post-2015 development agenda.

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