



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life

Distr.
LIMITEDE/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2020/WG.1/INF.1
10 December 2020
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)****Regional Expert Meeting on National Digital Development Reviews 2.0 – Enhanced Methodology and Updated Guiding Template****Online Meeting, 15-16 December 2020**

Day one: Tuesday, 15 December 2020 12:30-15:00 Beirut time

Day two: Wednesday, 16 December 2020 10:30-12:30 Beirut time

Information Note

I. BACKGROUND

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) launched the Advancing Digital Cooperation and Development Arab States Action Programme (ADCD-ASAP) in 2020, comprised of eight tracks, which aims among others, to produce Regional/National Digital Strategies/Agendas that would enable policymakers to bring change in policy, thinking and/or practices that respond to the needs of their countries towards harnessing ICTs for development, and accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. This project is a natural extension of several efforts that ESCWA has exerted in the field of digital development for a number of years.

The Regional Expert Meeting is being held within the framework of ADCD-ASAP's. It is a culmination of ten bilateral research interviews conducted during September and October 2020 with ten Arab countries that participated in the first round of the National Digital Development Reviews (NDDRs)¹ and the Regional Expert Meeting titled "National Digital Development Reviews - Review of Methodology and Guiding Template" held on 18 November 2020² that examined and discussed the 10 countries' feedback on the methodology and tools used to produce the NDDRs for 2019, which constituted inputs to the 1st edition of the Arab Digital Development Report for 2019 (ADDR 2019)³, as a co-production by ESCWA and cooperating countries.

This regional meeting will set the stage for the 2nd round of NDDRs expected to be launched in the first quarter of 2021, guided by a manual including an enhanced methodology and other tools that take into consideration common and important comments received from the focal points of the participated countries to further enhance the content and ease the process of developing the NDDRs by countries in close cooperation with ESCWA as well as the ADDR.

Furthermore, the meeting will launch a call for partnership with ESCWA and the League of Arab States (LAS) to design and develop complementary tools in support of the NDDRs/ADDR and invest in all UN and Arab existing expertise in the field of ICT for development in the Arab region.

¹ Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Oman, State of Palestine, the Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

² <https://www.unescwa.org/events/regional-expert-meeting-national-digital-development-reviews-review-methodology-and-guiding>.

³ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/arab-digital-development-report-2019>.

In this context, and to keep the momentum, partnership is also sought to collaborate in the development of the Arab ICT Strategy/Arab Digital Agenda (ADAICTS) under the umbrella of the League of Arab states⁴, expected to be finalized by end of 2021, and to be adopted by the Arab ICT Ministers soon after. UN and Arab concerned organizations working in the region as well as all Arab countries are welcome to participate in the ADAICTS design and respective stages. Participation of the National Focal Points that have been involved in the preparations of the first NDDRs round is encouraged to contribute to this collaborative work.

II. OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS OF THE MEETING

The Regional Expert Meeting aims to introduce the enhanced toolkit to be used for developing the 2021 NDDRs and the next ADDR edition to help Arab policy makers devise tailored evidence-based policies and strategies for advancing digital development and digital cooperation at the national and regional levels. Innovative suggested tools will also be discussed for potential piloting by interested countries and organizations. Furthermore, the meeting will pave the way towards the collaboration in the elaboration of the ADAICTS which initiation and details will be further discussed with prospective partners in a dedicated meeting planned to take place on 21 December 2020, whereby ESCWA and LAS will join efforts with Arab countries and concerned UN and Arab organizations to shape the ADAICTS and agree on the way forward for advancing digital development and digital cooperation in the region for the next ten years.

III. STRUCTURE AND THEMES OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE EXPERTS MEETING

The regional expert meeting, informed by the outcomes of the bilateral research interviews conducted during September and October 2020 with NDDR national focal points from the ten Arab countries participated to the NDDRs first round (2018-2019), as well as the outcome of the recently convened Regional Expert Meeting on "National Digital Development Reviews - Review of Methodology and Guiding Template" held on 18 November 2020, will comprise of the following main blocks:

- Discussion of the proposed ESCWA Enhanced Methodology and Updated Guiding Template to be adopted by national counterparts for the development of the 2021 NDDRs Round and the next ADDR edition.
- Partnership to develop innovative complementary tools for enhanced NDDRs/ADDR framework and better evidence-based tools for policy change in ICT for development in the Arab region. These tools include the **Digital Development Maturity Index (DDMI) and the Smart interactive observatory**.
- Technical cooperation for designing digital development national and regional agendas.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

A. PARTICIPANTS

The meeting is expected to gather ICT counterparts from Arab countries who participated in the NDDRs first round (2018-2019) as well as new interested Arab countries, UN sister organizations and concerned Arab organizations active in ICT for development in the Arab region.

B. LOGISTICAL ISSUES

Date and venue: The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), is organizing the Regional Expert Meeting on National Digital Development Reviews 2.0 – Enhanced Methodology and Updated Guiding Template via Internet on Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday & Wednesday 15-16 December 2020 Online Meeting, 15-16 December 2020

⁴ E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2020/TP.7., E/ESCWA/TDD/2019/TP.4

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Language: English and Arabic are the official languages of the Meeting. Interpretation between the two languages will not be available.

C. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence related to technical preparations should be directed to:

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