Regional United Nations Development Group of Arab States/MENA

The Arab Development Forum

Priorities for the Post – 2015 Agenda

Background

In the year 2000, leaders of the world community set forth a shared vision for development in the form of the Millennium Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were derived from the Declaration and set concrete targets around which global efforts could be mobilized. The goals focused in particular on development and poverty eradication. These goals were introduced as the Secretary General’s “road map” for the implementation of the Declaration. Eight goals and initially 18 targets and 48 indicators were laid out to harmonize reporting on the Millennium Declaration. The MDGs have enjoyed sustained interest and support from governments, the global development community, civil society and other stakeholders.

The MDGs represented a step forward in operationalizing new thinking on development since they went beyond an emphasis on growth alone, and drew attention to the multiple dimensions of development and poverty reduction. The MDG framework that followed has helped to galvanize development efforts, set global and national priorities, and focus action at all levels.

Important progress towards the MDGs has been made in most countries in the world, particularly towards the goals of eradicating poverty and improving access to primary education. Since 2000, there has been significant progress in meeting a number of the Millennium Development Goals and, at the global level; several of the goals are expected to be achieved by 2015. According to the 2012 Millennium Development Goals Report, extreme poverty has been falling and the global goal of halving the number of individuals living in extreme poverty, i.e. living on less than $1.25 a day, is expected to be met. The target of halving the number of people without access to sustainable sources of drinking water will also be achieved. Estimates suggest that there will be parity in primary school enrolment between boys and girls by 2015. In other areas, there has been substantial progress, even if the exact target may not be achieved. Child and maternal mortality has declined significantly and prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis have improved markedly.

However, the full picture is more complex and regional differences in progress can be stark. Moreover, improvements in income poverty do not always translate into advancements in other areas, such as addressing vulnerable groups, employment, gender segmentation of the labour market, improving food security or environmental sustainability, where there has been relatively little or no progress. In the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, demographic patters leading to a high rate of youth unemployment has intensified and represents a growing concern worldwide.

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Despite these critiques and the uneven progress, the MDGs have demonstrated that goals and targets play an important role. They help concretize key developmental challenges, they can assist in providing policy coherence, they facilitate the mobilization and allocation of resources, and can generate broad political support, and they provide a basis for monitoring progress. A future UN development agenda, based on the Millennium Declaration in its totality, will be an important part of global action to address the root causes of poverty and inequality globally and within planetary boundaries, incorporating the broader aspects of human development thinking, including in the sphere of environmental sustainability. Beyond these concerns, fundamental changes at the global level require a rethinking of the development framework, as the world has moved on since the MDGs were first introduced.

Arab countries have committed to the Millennium Declaration and the achievement of the MDGs. Most recently, the Declaration of the Arab Economic and Social Summit in January 2013 outlined a broad call among Arab governments to tackle a broad range of development issues, from employment, to gender issues, to food security, to poverty reduction and more in their pursuit of the MDGs.

The Arab region has achieved progress in many MDG areas, including significant strides in health and education. However gains have been uneven, the Arab region continued to be characterized by sharp disparities between the different sub-regions, particularly between the high-income countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Progress has varied, with setbacks such as insufficient investment, global economic disruption and the financial crisis, volatility in commodities markets, and conflict and instability hindering national efforts to achieve development objectives. Indeed, while several Arab countries are on track to achieve most of the MDG targets, the Least Developed Countries in the region, countries and territories experiencing conflict or occupation, and several Middle-Income Countries are unlikely to meet the majority of targets by the target year of 2015. Progress has also been uneven at sub-national levels. In several Arab countries progress has been more rapid in urban areas than in rural areas. Inequalities in access to services and opportunities have been reflected in entrenched gaps, particularly for the poorest and those most discriminated against.

Moreover, projections are showing that the instability witnessed in the Arab region over the last two-plus years has been associated with a halting of progress towards several MDGs in several countries, and backsliding in some cases. With approximately 1000 days until the MDG target date of 31 December 2015, there is a pressing need in some Arab countries to regain peace and stability on the basis of participation and social cohesion, so that progress towards development goals can be reinitiated.

Since the MDGs were launched in 2001, other development needs have gained attention or become more pressing. Following the historic events of 2011, a new era of development policy may be arising across the region. New social compacts are being debated in which development will be framed as more than economic growth and access to social services; it will also be about justice and accountability, inclusive growth and youth employment, and resilience to ecological change and resource scarcity. This holds important implications not only within the region itself but for the global post-2015 shift. Indeed, the transformational change in the Arab region is one of the most fundamental lessons in recent history.
on how hard-won development gains can be derailed unless issues like accountability, equality and sustainability are engaged at the core of development policy.

**Towards 2015 and Beyond**

As the target year of 2015 approaches the foremost responsibility of the world community is to continue to achieve progress against the MDGs. At the same time, discussions are underway on the goals and targets that could build on and succeed the MDGs.

The UN Secretary General has asked a High Level Panel of eminent persons including Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah and the Nobel Laureate Tawakkol Karman of Yemen to advise him on the future development framework. They will produce a report for the Secretary General at the end of May 2013. The Rio+20 conference held in June 2012 also created Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN is working closely with and for these groups with a view to supporting processes towards a Post-2015 framework that rests on the core values of human rights, equality and sustainability.

As part of that process the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) is supporting the work of the High-Level Panel and the Open Working Group by carrying out a global consultation bringing together governments, civil society, the private sector and think tanks to bring forward perspective and generate evidence on what scope and form people want for the post-2015 development framework.

This global conversation responds to a growing call for active participation in shaping the ‘world we want’. Taking place well before governments sit down to negotiate and finalize such a new agenda, the consultations underway provide evidence and perspectives to governments on the challenges people face in improving their lives and those of their families and communities.

So far over 200,000 people have been able to contribute to this global conversation; 83 national consultations are under way in all continents and across a range of countries. Processes have been designed to engage with groups and communities who would not normally have access to these discussions, those who are excluded and marginalized, and with young people who will assume responsibility for the planet and its people within the lifetime of the next development agenda.

Eleven thematic Forums are also taking place on areas that are contained in the MDGs – such as health, hunger, education and water – as well as new challenges that will shape the prospects for sustainable development in the coming decades such as energy, water and population dynamics. People from all backgrounds and all countries are contributing to discussions on how the existing global goals can be strengthened, and exploring new issues for consideration in a results-based development agenda.
Face-to-face meetings have been magnified by an active and growing online community, with people offering their opinions and knowledge and participating in MY World – the UN global survey on priorities for the next development agenda. The global public is invited to analyse the results on the MY World analytics page.

At this early stage, most of the 83 countries are still conducting consultations and validating the findings with their constituencies. The thematic consultations are also on-going, and My World continues to gain traction.

However several emerging messages are beginning to take shape. First and foremost, people around the world are confirming that the MDGs do have relevance and that there is a pressing need to accelerate progress towards their completion. However looking forward to a new agenda to be implemented once the world passes the 2015 target date, the consultations suggest three implications for a new development agenda. First, while measurability and focus will continue to be important, the new agenda should be balanced and holistic to be successful. Second, the consultations point to the need for a genuinely universal agenda, taking up persistent social challenges in relatively wealthy countries and acknowledging the interconnectedness of people, governments and business across the globe. Third, the new agreement must find a way to ensure real results, realize human rights and use technology to engage people the world over in taking the next development agenda forward.

In the Arab region the UNDG is facilitating consultations in Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen. Most of these consultations are still underway, but emerging messages include strong endorsements of the importance of quality education, of access to decent work, of the importance of good government for development, of the reduction of inequalities, of women’s empowerment, and of the fundamental importance of peace and security for human dignity and human development.

Consultations in the region have also underscored the importance of global partnership for development, and of the need for policy coherence and an enabling environment for development at the global, regional and national levels.

However the conversation has only just begun, and new messages are taking shape as discussions evolve. It is imperative for the discussion to be carried out as broadly and as inclusively as is possible in order for the next development framework to be as inspiring and relevant as it can be, in the Arab region and around the world.
The Arab Development Forum – Priorities for the Post-2015 Development Agenda

In order to succeed in building a clear, coherent and inspiring post-2015 development agenda, wide and open consultations that also include the voices of those who are usually unheard will be necessary. In order to foster such a process across the Arab countries, the Regional UNDG is proposing an initiative called the Arab Development Forum – Priorities for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The objective of the Forum is five-fold:

• To initiate a debate on what should be included in the post 2015 agenda, building on progress achieved over MDG implementation and addressing new and emerging challenges.

• To strengthen national debates on the post-2015 agenda by complementing formal inter-governmental consultations and UNCT-initiated national consultations with continuous engagement of a broad set of voices, including civil society and actors not often engaged in formal public deliberation. In particular, the Forum, which will be under the Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania al Abdullah, will stand as a strong complement to the formal inter-governmental consultations being organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), including the consultation held in Beirut on 14 March.

• To ensure that development debate in the region keeps up with the changing development context, key challenges and drivers-of-change of our time, from a people-centred perspective.

• To ensure that the deliberative momentum being built in the run-up to 2015 is not confined to stand-alone consultations but rather consists of on-going dialogue in the form of meetings, social media and traditional media.

• To strengthen a broad-based constituency for development in the Arab region, with a view to fostering ever-stronger citizen’s participation in monitoring, analysis and advocacy around development objectives, policies and results.

Strategy of the Forum

The overall strategy of the initiative revolves around inclusive engagement of a broad set of stakeholders on development issues. Such engagement will be articulated in three inter-connected and mutually supporting pillars:

• **Pillar 1: Dialogues:** Beginning with a launch event in April of 2013, the initiative will convene regular consultations bringing together broad sets of stakeholders to undertake dialogue on development trends and future priorities. Consultations will be of varying sizes and will draw on different stakeholders, however always with a view to deepening and broadening the circle of participants.¹

¹ Please see Annex One for information on Forum, including proposed agenda
• **Pillar 2: Social Media Campaign:** In parallel, the initiative will wage a social media campaign in order to foster awareness of the post-2015 process, gain access to the views of interested and online-active stakeholders on development priorities, and build a network of change-makers who are interested in advocating for effective development policy. Such activities will be undertaken in partnership with the Millennium Campaign and existing UNDG post-2015 outreach platforms such as the *World We Want* web site.

• **Pillar 3: Engagement with media and opinion leaders.** Also connected, the initiative will engage with “traditional (satellite, print, online) media institutions as well as opinion leaders in an effort to bring development issues to a wider audience and promote a constituency and policy climate conducive to strengthened development policy and planning. Examples of activities in this regard could include a series of “specials” on development issues to be run on regional satellite networks, as well as screened on the margins of General Assembly Sessions.

In order to kick-start the Arab Development Forum the Regional UNDG, is proposing a two-day Launch Event and Forum, in Amman, Jordan, on 10 and 11 April 2013.

The Forum will explore the unique challenges faced in the region and help inform national discussions across the region towards a post-2015 development agenda that builds on achievements and helps address development gaps and emerging drivers of change. Discussions and analysis will connect to outcomes from national consultations in Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen.

The purpose of the Forum is not to prescribe specific development strategies or policies. It will assess ongoing efforts within the UN system in the region; consult stakeholders in an inclusive manner, civil society, academia and the private sector; and generate ideas towards national visions on the post-2015 UN development agenda. Such an agenda should help create an enabling environment to meet shared development objectives, support solutions to regional problems and guide new national development and policy making efforts, while supporting the empowerment of civil society actors to help shape the region’s aspired shift to a new post-2015 social compact for development.

Objectives:

The aim of the Forum is to bring together different actors and experts to exchange on topics relevant to the post-2015 agenda and emerging development challenges more generally in the Arab region. It will focus mostly on representatives of civil society, including groups, which do not commonly have a chance to participate in public policy deliberation, and will also include parliamentarians who are active in shaping development policy, and representatives of the multilateral development community. The specific objectives of the event will be three:

- Launch and build momentum for the overall Arab Development Forum
- Provide inputs, momentum and visibility to stimulate dialogue on the post 2015 Agenda at national levels across the Arab region
- Strengthen the network of development analysts and advocates across the region

Participation, Format and Themes:

The Forum will bring together some 200 participants from across the Arab region to discuss the changing development content and critical challenges of the time, from their perspective, with a focus on civil society participants including advocates for youth empowerment, gender equality, and marginalized groups including persons living with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities. Parliamentarians, representatives of the private sector, and academia will also be invited.

Representatives of R/UNDG Agencies as well as UN Resident Coordinators (representing the UNCT) will participate.
High-level participation in the Forum is expected to include the SG’s High-Level Panel Member for Post – 2015 in the Arab region Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan; Helen Clark, Chair of UNDG; and the SG’s Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Alhindawi.

The Forum will span two working days, and the proposed format is a mixture of plenary sessions and parallel thematic working group sessions.

The Forum will open with keynote speeches from High Level Participants as well as the Chair of the UNDG, Helen Clark.

Following will be a series of Working Group sessions, arranged thematically and led by UNDG Agencies in accordance with their respective mandates. The five themes proposed represent a cross-section of issues that are of vital importance to the region, and also feature prominently in the MDGs framework (e.g. Poverty Reduction) or are included among the topics of the Global Thematic Consultations (e.g. climate change) catalysed by the UNDG and led by respective UN Agencies. The following five thematic working groups are proposed:

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<tr>
<th>Working Group Number</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Group 1</td>
<td>Poverty reduction, inclusive growth and employment generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Group 2</td>
<td>Conflict prevention and social cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Group 3</td>
<td>Voice, participation, citizen engagement and political inclusion</td>
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<td>Working Group 4</td>
<td>Access to and quality of basic services: health and education</td>
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<td>Working Group 5</td>
<td>Environmental sustainability Post Rio</td>
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Due to the tremendous importance of addressing inequalities from a human rights and human development perspective, the angle of inequalities (including gender, youth, sub-national, other) will be mainstreamed throughout the analysis of each working group.

Working Groups will carry out their work in two sessions. The first session will focus on current status and trends within the respective theme; the second session will focus on prospects for the future and policy orientations, which can help achieve results.

The official language of the event will be Arabic. Interpretation services will be provided into English, and, in the event of English language presentations and discussions, form Arabic into English.
Output of the Forum and Reporting:

This Forum offers an opportunity to contribute and engage in Arab viewpoints, experiences and perspectives that reflect the realities of the lives of men and women and development priorities following a period of historic transformational change.

Working Groups will each prepare brief reports on the findings of each session. These reports will be consolidated into a Chairperson’s Report covering overall findings. The Chairperson’s Report will feed into the UNDG synthesis report (mid-Summer) and the UNSG’s report to the General Assembly (September). It will be used to stimulate and shape national consultations across the Arab States region.

Visibility and Outreach:

In accordance with the approach of the overall Arab Development Forum initiative, the dialogue will be covered by a Regional Satellite Network as well as print and online media. Leading regional bloggers and tweeters will also be invited to participate in and cover the event. The Regional UNDG will initiate a social media outreach and will promote visibility within national, regional and international development and policy communities. Media related enquiries can be addressed to dania.darwish@undp.org.

Inputs to the Forum and role of Regional UNDG and UNCTs:

Regional UNDG:

Inputs will be needed from, UNDG agencies within their respective substantive mandates, and UNCTs, as follows:²

- The Regional UNDG (R/UNDG) Secretariat will provide overall regional fact sheets and background papers on progress towards MDGs and other development issues, as well as information on Post-2015 process.
- R/UNDG Agencies to provide 10 – 15 minute presentations on status and trends within the thematic area of the working groups they respectively lead (a format will be provided to guide the preparations for the sessions). R/UNDG Agencies also to provide up to three suggested opinion leaders active at the regional level who will be invited to the event.

All materials should be sent to the R/UNDG Secretariat by 02 April 2013 to allow for these to be posted on the website for The Arab Development Forum.

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² As the official language of the proceedings will be Arabic, inputs are expected to be that language. English-language materials may be accepted as needed on a case-by-case basis.
**UNCT Role:**

In order to ensure effective deliberations that resonate at national level throughout the region, UNCTs will be encouraged to undertake the following:

1) **Nomination.** Nominate 3-5 participants from respective country, bringing together pertinent knowledge on development issues at national or sub-national level, including as relates to youth or gender perspective. **Emphasis is expected to be on civil society participants;** recommendations of parliamentarians or private sector representatives are welcomed as well. Due efforts are expected to be made to recommend a diversity of participants, with considerations for gender balance and representation of youth and sub-national experiences. Where national consultations on post-2015 are already planned, nomination may be expected to partially overlap with such process. The R/UNDG will cover the participation (travel and hotel) of 3-5 participants from each country.

2) **Findings of National Consultations.** Where national consultations are planned under the umbrella of UNDG post-2015 consultation process, UNCTs are expected to have completed such consultations and be prepared to submit findings to secretariat. Participants from such countries will be expected to be familiar with such findings and other national and sub-national development priorities and feed these into the discussions at the forum. In addition, UNCTs who are not part of the initial round of post 2015 national consultations will receive funding to undertake efforts to support participants to make effective contributions through training and Forum in advance of event.

3) **Promotion of My World Survey.** The United Nations and partners have created a global survey asking people to choose their priorities for a better world. Results will be submitted to the High Level Panel before their meetings in Monrovia, Bali and New York before they present their final report to the Secretary General to advise on their vision of the post-2015 development agenda. UNCTs are strongly encouraged to promote participation in this survey as part of their outreach campaign around post-2015. ([http://www.myworld2015.org/](http://www.myworld2015.org/))

4) **Pre-Event Forum.** Where national consultations are not planned as yet under the UNDG post-2015 consultation process, UNCTs are encouraged to convene nominated participants to discuss relevant issues and prepare participants for the thematic consultations at the Arab Development Forum.

5) **Media Sensitization and Outreach.** UNCTs are expected to liaise with local media to ensure coverage of deliberations or findings of Event or national preparations or follow-up of Event.

6) **Dissemination and Follow-up.** UNCTs are encouraged to disseminate findings of the Arab Development Forum with a view to enriching and stimulating national discussion on post-2015 process and national development priorities. UNCTs are further encouraged to conduct national follow-up discussions.

Funding support of up to $5,000 will be provided for such activities for countries in which national consultations have not already been funded under the UNDG window.
Logistical Arrangements

The R/UNDG Secretariat will make the required logistical arrangements (meeting venue, breakout rooms, hotel reservations, translation etc.) and a logistical note will be share with the participants accordingly.