

## Findings of the Analysis of CCAs, UNDAFs, AFSDs and LAS Summits - Possible Areas of Focus for Developing a Regional Strategic Framework

### Background

The October 2018 R-UNDG meeting agree that the RCM and R-UNSDG should further explore the development of a Regional Strategic Framework to:

- Provide **collective analysis** of regional development challenges and their root causes in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda;
- Serve as a reference for **prioritizing themes of future RCM and R-UNSDG meetings** and for rationalizing regional Working Groups;
- Serve as an indicators of possible **areas for future joint research** and reports or complementary and reinforcing interventions across organizations;
- Serve as a precursor to the development of a **practical guide for UNCTs** to mainstream the regional dimension of development into their CCA and UNDAF;
- Serve as a **reference for UN discussions with the League of Arab States** on priority clusters of intervention.

The joint R-UNSDG/RCM Secretariat was tasked with analyzing existing research and studies in order to identify key challenges facing the region that could inform the development of a Regional Strategic Framework.

In preparation for the 2019 R-UNSDG and RCM meetings, the joint Secretariat has:

- Reviewed **16 CCAs and UNDAFs** (Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen);
- Reviewed the **outcome documents of the Arab Forums for Sustainable Development** from 2016-2018;
- Reviewed the outcome document of the **League of Arab States Economic and Social Summit** of January 2019.

### Findings of the Analysis

As the Annexes show, this review revealed a number of recurring themes that were identified in multiple CCAs and UNDAFs, the outcome documents of multiple Arab Forums for Sustainable Development, or highlighted as priorities in the League of Arab States Economic and Social Summit of January 2019. The main themes identified are:

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▪ Demographics                   | ▪ Health                    |
| ▪ Economic Growth                | ▪ International Cooperation |
| ▪ Education                      | ▪ International Migration   |
| ▪ Energy                         | ▪ Peace and Security        |
| ▪ Environment and Climate Change | ▪ Poverty Reduction         |
| ▪ Gender Equality                | ▪ Trade                     |
| ▪ Governance                     | ▪ Water                     |

A closer analysis of these themes and the challenges related to each of the themes suggests **six themes with a strong transboundary dimension** that would be well-suited for the Regional Strategic Framework. These challenges could benefit from two main kinds of interventions:

- Preparing **practical guidance to UNCTs** on how to harmonize support to addressing the challenge through **coordinated interventions in multiple countries**;
- Preparing collective inter-agency analysis and research or action at the regional level.

The table below presents a grouping of the challenges identified by the Secretariat by theme, divided into **Shared Challenges** (common to multiple countries) and **Transboundary Challenges** (that require cross-border action). For the six themes with a strong transboundary dimension, the table also suggests **possible questions that could inform the future development of the Regional Strategic Framework**, divided into **Practical Guidance to UNCTs on Cross-border Coordination** and **Collective Inter-agency Analysis, Research or Engagement at the Regional Level**.

Themes	Shared Challenges	Transboundary Challenges	Possible Challenges to be Addressed by the Regional Framework	
			Practical Guidance to UNCTs on Cross-border Coordination	Collective Inter-agency Analysis, Research or Engagement at the Regional Level
Environment and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustainable management of natural resources</li> <li>▪ Climate change adaptation/Integration of CC measures into national policies and plans</li> <li>▪ Build resilience to climate shocks and natural disasters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integrated approach to natural resource management</li> <li>▪ Climate change adaptation/Integration of CC measures into national policies and plans</li> <li>▪ Build resilience to climate shocks and natural disasters</li> </ul>	<p>1) How to address the management of shared natural resources in the UNDAFs of neighbouring countries to ensure harmonized policies?</p> <p>2) How to promote cross-border cooperation in dealing with climate change adaptation or resilience to climate shocks/natural disasters?</p>	
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Water scarcity, desertification and land degradation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited available water resources, poor water infrastructure, access to safe and clean drinking water, limited water supply for commercial activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>1) How to address the management of transboundary water resources in the UNDAFs of neighbouring countries to ensure harmonized policies?</b></p>	
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the use of renewable energy</li> <li>▪ Ensure universal access to affordable and modern energy services</li> <li>▪ Energy efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adopt a regional perspective to increasing the use of renewable energy</li> <li>▪ Common electricity market, smart grids, green corridors</li> <li>▪ Energy efficiency</li> </ul>	<p>1) How to promote the development of a regional electricity market/smart grids/smart corridors or cross-border renewable energy projects?</p>	<p><b>1) How to promote the development of a regional electricity market/smart grids/smart corridors or cross-border renewable energy projects?</b></p>
Economic Growth and Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support sustainable economic growth</li> <li>▪ Increase productive employment and decent work</li> <li>▪ Economic diversification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formulating sustainable approaches to economic diversification through regional and multi-stakeholder consultation, integration and cooperation</li> <li>▪ International and regional trade to establish value chains and support economic growth and job creation</li> <li>▪ Support the development of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and the Arab Customs Union</li> </ul>	<p>2) How to support the establishment of regional value chains through coordinated support in a number of UNDAFs?</p>	<p><b>1) How to promote regional, multi-stakeholder thinking on sustainable approaches to economic diversification?</b></p> <p><b>3) How to support the development of GAFTA and ACU?</b></p>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to quality and affordable health services</li> <li>▪ Universal health coverage</li> <li>▪ Reproductive health/Maternal health, child health</li> </ul>			

Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Women's participation and equal opportunities in political, economic and public life</li> <li>▪ Violence against women and girls</li> </ul>			
Poverty Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social protection to ensure coverage of poor and vulnerable people</li> </ul>			
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels</li> <li>▪ Promote rule of law and equal access to justice</li> <li>▪ Inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making</li> </ul>			
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to and quality of education</li> <li>▪ Need to ensure relevant technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship</li> <li>▪ Build the capacity of countries to harness ICT</li> </ul>			
International Migration and Demographic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rapid and unregulated urbanization, high birth rates</li> <li>▪ Youth, elderly, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing harmonized policies to international migration across the region</li> <li>▪ Immigration, emigration, displacement and refugees</li> </ul>	<p><b>1) How to develop harmonized policies to international migration across the region through coordinated support in a number of UNDAFs?</b></p>	
International Cooperation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reducing the impact of conflict on populations, mitigating effects of regional insecurity</li> <li>▪ Strengthen regional/international cooperation and engagement with other countries/regional bodies.</li> <li>▪ Strengthen regional cooperation among civil society organizations</li> </ul>		<p><b>1) How to strengthen regional multi-stakeholder cooperation and engagement on mitigating the impact of conflict on populations?</b></p>

## Summary of Questions to Consider in Further Developing the Regional Strategic Framework

### Practical Guidance to UNCTs on Cross-border Coordination

- How to support the establishment of regional value chains through coordinated support in a number of UNDAFs?
- How to promote the development of a regional electricity market/smart grids/smart corridors or cross-border renewable energy projects?
- How to address the management of shared natural resources in the UNDAFs of neighbouring countries to ensure harmonized policies?
- How to promote cross-border cooperation in dealing with climate change adaptation or resilience to climate shocks/natural disasters?
- How to develop harmonized policies on international migration across the region through coordinated support in a number of UNDAFs?
- How to address the management of transboundary water resources in the UNDAFs of neighbouring countries to ensure harmonized policies?

### Way Forward

A possible next step in developing the Regional Strategic Framework could be to choose some of the questions outlined in the table above and develop them further into a guidance note or action plan. Any of the questions could be chosen, however, bearing in mind existing R-UNSDG/RCM structures, a possible way forward could be to:

- Task the International Migration Working Group with further elaborating what kind of guidance could be provided to UNCTs with regard to harmonizing policies related to international migration across the region through coordinated interventions in multiple UNDAFs;
- Task the Water Working Group with further elaborating what kind of guidance could be provided to UNCTs with regard to harmonizing policies related to the management of transboundary water resources through coordinated interventions in the UNDAFs of neighbouring countries;
- Discuss whether the R-UNSDG/RCM would like to set up a Task Team to consider the four proposals for collective inter-agency analysis, research or engagement at the regional level and develop an action plan for advancing one of them.

### Collective Inter-agency Analysis, Research or Engagement at the Regional Level

- How to promote regional, multi-stakeholder thinking on sustainable approaches to economic diversification?
- How to support the development of GAFTA and ACU?
- How to promote the development of a regional electricity market/smart grids/smart corridors or cross-border renewable energy projects?
- How to strengthen regional multi-stakeholder cooperation and engagement on mitigating the impact of conflict on populations?

# Desk Review of Analysis of Issues in CCAs/UNDAFs 2019

## 1. Introduction

In line with the Operational Framework for Cooperation, it has been agreed that the RCM R-UNSDG in the Arab region will develop a regional strategic framework, covering the period 2019–2023. The regional strategic framework responds to the Secretary-General's call to *“ensure more effective UN action on challenges and opportunities that know no borders [by ensuring] that the process of the development and review of UNDAFs includes more thorough analysis of regional and transboundary issues, with regional economic and social commissions as an integral part of the process.”* (Para 100 – SG Report 2018/7)

The purpose of the regional strategic framework is to:

- Provide collective analysis of regional development challenges and their root causes in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda;
- Serve as a reference for prioritizing themes of future RCM and R-UNSDG meetings and for rationalizing regional Working Groups;
- Serve as an indicator of possible areas for future joint research and reports or complementary and reinforcing interventions across organizations;
- Serve as a precursor to the development of a practical guide for UNCTs to mainstream the regional dimension of development into their CCA and UNDAF;
- Serve as a reference for UN discussions with the League of Arab States on priority clusters of intervention.

The regional strategic framework will not be an exhaustive list of issues of importance to UN agencies in the region; nor will it limit the planning of individual agencies. Rather, the regional strategic framework should be a blueprint to identify challenges that require joint action at the regional level in order to facilitate more effective and harmonized programming on shared and transboundary issues at the country level.

As part of the process of developing the regional strategic framework, in-depth analysis, based on existing research and studies, of the challenges facing the region will be undertaken with a view to identifying a limited number of strategic issues.

As a first step in this analysis, the joint RCM – R-UNSDG Secretariat has conducted a desk review of existing CCAs and UNDAFs to extract the shared challenges and transboundary issues identified by UNCTs in the region.

This note outlines the key findings from this desk review. The note is organised in two main sections, 1) Common Issues (across countries in the region) and 2) Transboundary Issues. The full list of CCA and UNDAFs reviewed can be found in Annex A.

## 2. Common Issues

The most common issues across all CCAs/UNDAFs in the region were in the areas of Environment and Climate Change, Energy, Economic Growth, Health, Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, Governance and Education.

In the area of Environment and Climate Change, the most commonly noted issue is the need for the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, followed by climate change adaptation and the need to build resilience to climate shocks and natural disasters, and the integration of climate change measures into national policies and plans. Water scarcity, desertification and land degradation were also noted as major issues in the majority of CCAs/UNDAFs. Other commonly noted issues include biodiversity, the conservation of ecosystems and the use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems.

In the area of Energy, the most common issues noted were the need to increase the use/availability of renewable energy, followed by ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services and increasing energy efficiency.

In the area of Economic Growth, the most common issue noted include the need to support sustainable economic growth in order to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, particularly for women and youth. The need for economic diversification was also highlighted in the majority of the CCAs/UNDAFs, both in the Gulf and other oil producing countries as well as in non-oil producing countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

In the area of Health, the most common issue noted was access to quality and affordable health services. Other commonly noted issues include universal health coverage, communicable diseases, newborn and child health, non-communicable diseases, maternal health and sexual and reproductive health-care services.

In the area of Gender Equality, issues of women's participation and equal opportunities in political, economic and public life were most commonly noted, followed by issues of discrimination and violence against women and girls. Other commonly noted issues were related to harmful cultural practices (including FGM) and sexual reproductive health rights.

In the area of Poverty, the most common issue noted was the need for appropriate social protection systems to ensure coverage of poor and vulnerable people. The need to build the resilience of the poor and vulnerable people was also noted in many CCAs/UNDAFs.

In the area of Governance, the most commonly noted issue was the need to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, followed by promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice. Other commonly noted issues include ensuring inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making and providing legal identity for all.

In the area of Education, the most commonly noted issues were in relation to access and quality of education, including early-childhood care, pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical, vocational and tertiary education. Another commonly identified issue is the need for youth and adults to have the relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

An expanded list of issues identified can be found in Annex B.

### 3. Transboundary Issues

#### 3.1 International Migration

Despite its relevance in the region, migration does not feature heavily in CCAs/UNDAFs, with only a third of the CCAs/UNDAFs reviewed noted it as an issue. However, it is likely that this is due to the transboundary nature of the issue and the fact that responding to international migration at the national level is a challenge.

#### 3.2 Climate Change

The issue of Climate Change features heavily in all CCAs/UNDAFs with almost all UNCTs identifying it as an important issue and an area of intervention for UNCTs. Specifically, the need for climate change adaptation and building resilience to climate shocks and natural disasters were the most commonly identified issues, followed by the need to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

#### 3.3 Energy

The issue of Energy features in almost all CCAs/UNDAFs. The focus is very much on ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services, increasing the use/availability of renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency of existing sources.

#### 3.4 Water

Water scarcity is identified in all CCAs/UNDAF reviewed and is an issue that affects all countries in the region. The issues range from limited available of water to poor water infrastructure, resulting in limited access to safe and clean drinking water, as well as limited water supply for commercial activities.

#### 3.5 Peace and Security

Peace and security feature heavily in the CCAs/UNDAFs in the region with almost all CCAs/UNDAFs identifying this as a major issue. However, as expected, the focus varies from country to country. For those countries with an ongoing conflict, the focus is on prompting peace and reducing the impact of the conflict on the population. In neighbouring countries, the focus is on ensuring stability and mitigating the effects of neighbouring/regional insecurity, including supporting national security actors to combat terrorism, prevent violent extremism and generally promote peace and security.

#### 3.6 Trade

The majority of CCAs/UNDAFs reviewed note international and regional trade as an issue and the need to strengthen regional and international trade to support economic growth and job creation.

### 3.7 International Cooperation

The majority of CCAs/UNDAFs reviewed make a direct reference to need the need to strengthen regional and/or international cooperation and the engagement with other countries and/or international/regional bodies. Where there is reference, it primarily focusses on North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, ODA or global/regional partnership. A number of the Gulf Countries identify partnership with the cooperation with the GCC and in Djibouti, there is a specific mention of the need to work with IGAD.



## Annex A: List of CCAs/UNDAFs Reviewed

### Algeria

- CCA (2015)
- UNDAF 2016-2020

### Bahrain

- CCA (2015)
- UNSPF 2018-2022

### Djibouti

- CCA (2016)
- UNDAF 2018-2022

### Egypt

- CCA (2016)
- UNPDF 2018-2022

### Jordan

- CCA (2017)
- UNSDF 2018-2022

### Lebanon

- CCA (2016)
- UNSF 2017-2020

### Libya

- CCA (2018)
- UNSF 2019-2020

### Morocco

- CCA (2015)
- UNDAF 2017-2021

### Palestine

- CCA (2016)
- UNDAF 2018-2022

### Saudi Arabia

- CCA (2015)
- UNCCSF 2017-2021

### Somalia

- CCA (2017)
- UNSF 2017-2020

### Sudan

- CCA (2016)
- UNDAF 2018-2021

### Syria

- UNSF 2016-2017

### Tunisia

- CCA (2013)
- UNDAF 2015-2019

### UAE

- UNCSF 2016-2020

### Yemen

- UNDAF 2012-2015

## Annex B: Common Issues Identified

This section provides further detail on the most commonly identified issues in the CCAs/UNDAFs. The values provided in the tables indicate the percentage of CCAs/UNDAFs in which the specific issue was identified, e.g. *100% of CCAs/UNDAFs identified the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources as an issue.*

### Most Commonly Identified Issues (Top 50 ranked)

Issue	%
Environment and Climate Change – Water scarcity and water resources management	100%
Environment and Climate Change – Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources	100%
Environment and Climate Change – Resilience and adaptive capacity	100%
Energy – Energy access	100%
Economic Growth – Per capita economic growth	94%
Economic Growth – Full and productive employment and decent work for all	94%
Environment and Climate Change – Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	88%
Health - Universal health coverage	81%
Gender Equality – Women's participation	81%
Governance – Accountable and transparent institutions	81%
Poverty – Social protection systems	75%
Education – Primary and secondary education	75%
Gender Equality – Discrimination against all women and girls	75%
Gender Equality – Violence against women	63%
Economic Growth – Economic productivity through diversification	63%
Environment and Climate Change – Combat desertification and land degradation	63%
Governance – Rule of law and access to justice	63%
Partnerships – Availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data	63%
Poverty – Reduce poverty	50%
Education – Early childhood development, care and pre-primary education	50%
Education – Technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	50%
Education – Skills (incl. technical and vocational skills)	50%
Education – Equal access	50%

Inequality – Social, economic and political inclusion of all	50%
Governance – Inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making	50%
Hunger – End malnutrition	44%
Hunger – Agricultural productivity	44%
Health – Communicable diseases	44%
Energy – Renewable energy	44%
Economic Growth – Development-oriented policies	44%
Economic Growth – Youth unemployment	44%
Governance – Legal identity for all	44%
Partnerships – Statistical capacity-building	44%
Poverty – Eradicate extreme poverty	38%
Hunger – End hunger	38%
Health – New-born and child mortality	38%
Health – Non-communicable diseases	38%
Gender Equality – Harmful practices	38%
Migration – Orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration	38%
Sustainable Cities – Inclusive and sustainable urbanization	38%
Environment and Climate Change – Use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems	38%
Environment and Climate Change – Conservation of mountain ecosystem/ biodiversity	38%
Health – Maternal mortality	31%
Water – Safe drinking water	31%
Water – Sanitation and hygiene	31%
Economic Growth – Decouple economic growth from environmental degradation	31%
Environment and Climate Change – Sustainable management of all types of forests	31%
Governance - Reduce all forms of violence	31%
Partnerships – Multilateral trading system	31%
Partnerships – Implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access	31%

## Most Commonly Identified Issues by Thematic Area

### Environment and Climate Change (Top 10)

Issues	%
Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources	100%
Climate resilience and adaptive capacity	100%
Water scarcity and water resources management	
Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	88%
Combat desertification and land degradation	63%
Conservation of mountain ecosystem/ biodiversity	38%
Use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems	38%
Sustainable management of all types of forests	31%
Management of chemicals and all wastes	25%
Reduce waste	25%
Sustainable consumption and production	25%

### Energy

Issues	%
Energy access	100%
Renewable energy	44%
Energy efficiency	25%

### Economic Growth

Issues	%
Full and productive employment and decent work for all	94%
Per capita economic growth	94%
Economic productivity through diversification	63%
Development-oriented policies	44%
Youth unemployment	44%
Decouple economic growth from environmental degradation	31%
Forced labour	19%
Aid for Trade	6%
Expand access to banking, insurance and financial	6%
Sustainable tourism	6%

### Health (Top 10)

Issues	%
Universal health coverage	81%
Communicable diseases	44%
New-born and child mortality	38%
Non-communicable diseases	38%
Maternal mortality	31%
Sexual and reproductive health-care services	25%
Hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination	19%
Sexual and reproductive health rights	19%
Health financing and resourcing	13%
Substance abuse	13%

### Gender Equality

Issues	%
Women's participation	81%
Discrimination against all women and girls	75%
Violence against women	63%
Harmful cultural practices, including FGM	38%
Unpaid and domestic work	13%
Policy and legislation	6%

### Poverty

Issues	%
Social protection systems	75%
Reduce poverty	50%
Eradicate extreme poverty	38%
Resilience	25%
Economic rights	6%

## Governance

Issues	%
Accountable and transparent institutions	81%
Rule of law and access to justice	63%
Inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making	50%
Legal identity for all	44%
Reduce all forms of violence	31%
Access to information	19%
Child abuse and trafficking	19%
Reduce corruption and bribery	19%
Illicit financial and arms flows	13%
Non-discriminatory laws and policies	6%

## Education

Issues	%
Primary and secondary education	75%
Early childhood development, care and pre-primary education	50%
Equal access	50%
Skills (incl. technical and vocational skills)	50%
Technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	50%
Facilities	19%
Supply of teachers	19%
Literacy and numeracy	13%
Knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development	6%

## Partnerships (Top 10)

Issues	%
Availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data	63%
Effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships	31%
Duty-free and quota-free market access	31%
Multilateral trading system	31%
Exports of developing countries	25%
Multi-stakeholder Partnerships Global partnership	25%
Investment promotion	19%
Long-term debt sustainability	19%
Official development assistance	19%

North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation	13%
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## Inequality

Issues	%
Social, economic and political inclusion of all	50%
Income growth of the bottom 40%	19%
Enhanced representation	6%

## Migration

Issues	%
Orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration	38%

## Sustainable Cities

Issues	%
Inclusive and sustainable urbanization	38%
Environmental impact of cities	19%
National and regional development planning	6%
Public spaces	6%
Safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems	6%

## Clean Water

Issues	%
Clean Water – Sanitation and hygiene	31%
Clean Water – Water quality (pollution and hazardous waste)	6%
Clean Water – Water-related ecosystems	6%

## Infrastructure

Issues	%
Quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure	25%
Clean and environmentally sound infrastructure	25%

## Industrialization

Issues	%
Inclusive and sustainable industrialisation	19%

# Desk Review of Key Regional Challenges Identified by the Arab Forums for Sustainable Development

*Draft 19 March 2019*

## Introduction

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The regional strategic framework will not be an exhaustive list of issues of importance to UN agencies in the region; nor will it limit the planning of individual agencies. Rather, the regional strategic framework should be a blueprint to identify challenges that require joint action at the regional level in order to facilitate more effective and harmonized programming on shared and transboundary issues at the country level.

As part of the process of developing the regional strategic framework, in-depth analysis, based on existing research and studies, of the challenges facing the region will be undertaken with a view to identifying a limited number of strategic issues.

As a first step in this analysis, the joint RCM – R-UNSDG Secretariat has conducted a desk review of the key regional challenge identified by the Arab Forums for Sustainable Development.

## Overview

The Arab Forums for Sustainable Development are an annual high-level regional platform, where multiple stakeholders discuss coordination pathways for the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region. Their findings and recommendations, conveying key messages from the region and its countries, are presented at the High-Level Political Forum in New York.

The Arab Forums have identified a number of priority challenges facing the region that would benefit from coordinated responses by the Regional UNDS. A key common thread arising from the Forums is that **development planning in the region needs to more effectively recognize and incorporate the linkages among the Sustainable Development Goals** relating to the environment, natural resources, climate change and economic and social objectives.

Given the regional and cross-border nature of challenges related to demographics, environmental degradation, water and energy supply and consumption, and economic diversification, the Forums have concluded that **cooperation must be stepped up to develop coordinated and consistent solutions and policies** that ensure sustainable resources and a life of dignity for all.

### 1. Demographic Challenges

The Arab Forums for Sustainable Development have identified demographics a being of paramount importance in the Arab region, where most countries are undergoing major demographic transformations. There have been unprecedented population movements caused by immigration, emigration, displacements and refugees, with all the attendant negative impacts on the lives of the migrants, displaced persons and refugees themselves.

At the same time, there has been a natural change in demographic makeup caused by such factors as high birth rates and rapid and unregulated urbanization. These dynamics highlight the need for a different approach that responds to the development needs of young people, who are a majority in many Arab countries, and the needs of other demographic groups identified in the 2030 Agenda, including children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups. Developing adequate responses to these challenges required cross-border cooperation and coordination.

### 2. Economic Diversification

The Arab Forums for Sustainable Development have confirmed the importance of adopting a sustainable development approach built on economic diversification, addressing consumption patterns and strengthening sustainable production in view of the challenges facing Arab countries, including economic pressures, demographic changes and the depletion of natural resources such as oil, water and agricultural land.

They have further stressed the importance of involving a broad group of stakeholders – including local governments, the private sector and civil society –

in formulating sustainable policies on economic diversification, investing in science and technology, and strengthening regional cooperation and integration to build capacity, mobilize resources and be able to fully benefit from the continuing industrial revolution.

### **3. Energy**

The Arab Forums for Sustainable Development have highlighted the need for Arab economies to move towards sustainable energy, while taking into account disparities in country priorities resulting from the conditions they face, given that business-as-usual in the fields of energy and natural resource management in the Arab region is not sustainable.

They have also highlighted the need to consider renewable energy from a regional perspective, rather than from that of individual countries, to achieve an optimal share of renewable energy in the energy mix. This requires strengthening cooperation, networking and trade between Arab countries as well as promoting Arab integration projects and initiatives, such as an Arab common electricity market, while focusing on smart grids and green corridors.

### **4. Environment**

The Arab Forums for Sustainable Development have stressed the importance of mitigating the negative effects of economic growth on the environment by evaluating the environmental impact of development projects and by incorporating issues of biodiversity and natural resources into development planning.

They have further underscored the need to preserve biodiversity and follow an integrated approach to natural resource management, given that natural resource depletion both leads to and results from conflict and displacement, which requires identifying mechanisms that prevent land degradation and desertification so as to reduce pressure on populations and services and preserve peace. These challenges are not limited by the borders of states and finding effective solutions to managing them requires regional cooperation and coordination.

### **5. Water**

The Arab Forums for Sustainable Development have reaffirmed the imperative to strive to achieve water security in the Arab region at the level of households and local communities, at the subnational, national and regional levels and between countries, to guarantee the provision of and access to sufficient clean water and sanitation services for all.

They have also stressed the importance of participation, partnerships and international funding, in addition to capacity building and preparing for natural disasters such as drought and floods, as key factors for achieving water security in the Arab region.

### **6. Role of Civil Society Organizations**

Finally, the Arab Forums for Sustainable Development have called for the establishment of a platform for civil society organizations operating in the Arab

region, to serve as a regional mechanism to reinforce the role civil society organizations in sustainable development, in following up on the implementation of national plans, including the 2030 Agenda, and in scrutinizing Governments.



## Key Issues, Recommendations and Actions Arising from the League of Arab States Economic and Social Summit

Issues Identified in the Declaration	Details	Recommendations and Actions
Migration	<p>Due to the magnitude of the crisis of refugees and displaced persons in Arab States and the consequent economic and social burdens on host Arab countries, the major challenges are improving the situation of refugees and displaced persons and reducing the impact their presence has on the host countries.</p>	<p>Stress the need for all international donors, specialized organizations and Arab funds to secure funding for the implementation of development projects in hosting Arab countries to support national development projects and to reduce the economic and social impact of such temporary hosting.</p> <p>Call for more Arab and international investments in the host countries.</p>
Palestine	<p>Believing in the collective Arab and Islamic responsibility toward Jerusalem to preserve the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of Jerusalem, and stressing the need for all relevant organizations and entities to stand together to secure the necessary funding to implement projects in the strategic development plan for Jerusalem (2018 – 2022).</p> <p>Affirm the international mandate given to UNRWA, based on the decision to establish it, and reject any decision aimed at ending or reducing its role.</p> <p>States to abide by international law and legitimate international resolutions related to the legal status of Jerusalem and not to recognize it as the capital of the Israeli occupation or the moving of embassies to it.</p>	<p>Call on all relevant organizations and entities to identify the means to mobilize public support for the implementation of the plan.</p> <p>Call for securing the means and funding needed for its budget in order for it to carry out its role and responsibilities.</p> <p>Affirm Arab determination to take political and economic measures against any decision that violates the legal status of Jerusalem.</p>

<p>Development of Information and Communication Technology</p>	<p>Recognizing the importance of information and communication technology in development and the need for Arab countries to keep up-to-date in the ICT revolution by adopting proactive policies in order to build the needed potential to benefit from the digital economy and to support special initiatives.</p> <p>Emphasizing the importance of developing a joint Arab vision in the digital economy.</p>	<p>Value the initiative of His Highness the Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to <b>establish an investment fund in the fields of technology and digital economy of \$200 million, in cooperation with the private sector. Kuwait and Qatar have both contributed \$50 million, which will be entrusted to the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.</b></p> <p>Call on Arab countries to support this initiative and to facilitate the strengthening of the joint Arab economy and to create promising jobs for Arab youth.</p> <p>Hope that banks and the Arab fund will consider using parts of their annual net profit to support future needs and ensuring the continuity of this fund.</p>
<p>Framework of Arab Economic Integration</p>	<p>Supporting the process of Arab economic and social development and strengthening the framework of Arab economic integration.</p>	<p>The need to follow up on the progress of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and the needs for the Arab Customs Union, with the hope of reaching a joint Arab market, and the need to put forth all efforts to overcome obstacles that prevent these from happening.</p> <p>Stress the importance of funding projects for Arab integration and the completion of the Aid for Trade Initiative for Arab States.</p>
<p>Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)</p>	<p>Emphasizing the vital and important role played by SMEs in both developed and developing economies in solving the problem of unemployment, and recognizing their crucial role in increasing national income and industrial</p>	<p><b>Adopted a pilot project for the development of the SME sector in order to ensure the integration of Arab economies, create competitive advantages and reduce</b></p>

	production.	<p><b>unemployment.</b></p> <p>Stress the need for a mechanism to follow-up the functioning of this pilot and evaluating the policies and programs for developing SMEs</p> <p>Calls on the private sector to support the competition of these institutions.</p>
Energy	There are changes and developments being witnessed by countries of the world, which highlight the importance of diversifying energy sources.	<p><b>Adopted the Arab Strategy for Sustainable Energy 2030, in order to achieve the sustainable development of an Arab energy system.</b></p>
Poverty	Emphasizing the importance of investing in the human as the shortest path to achieving the required economic growth, and as a response to the rapid global developments that have negatively impacted Arab development, leading to an increase in poverty and unemployment rates.	<p><b>Adopted the Arab Strategic Framework to Eradicate Poverty 2020-2030</b> as a way to enhance Arab efforts to achieve comprehensive sustainable development in the Arab region, with a goal of reducing multi-dimensional poverty by 50% by 2030, and stressed the importance of following up on its implementation.</p> <p>Call on the private sector, institutions and civil society in the Arab world to provide all the necessary support to reflect positively on the Arab human.</p>
Health and Well-being	Based on the belief in the importance of providing healthcare to all members of society:	<p><b>Approved the “Pink Wallet” initiative as a regional initiative for women's health in the Arab region,</b> in order to implement the SDGs and ensure that all people enjoy health and well being at all ages.</p>
Technical and Vocational Education	Upgrading technical and vocational education in the Arab world and linking it to the requirements of the labor market as one of the elements of comprehensive	Emphasize on the need to develop skills and encourage creativity and innovation.

	development.	Emphasize the need to improve legislation governing the labor market and vocational training in order to achieve the objectives of sustainable development.
Family	Based on the importance of role of the family in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda at the social, economic and cultural levels:	<b>Adopted the document of the Platform for Action for the Family in the Arab Region</b> , as part of implementing the SDGs.
Women	In recognizing the importance of women playing an active role in Arab societies and the need to empower and integrate them in all economic, social and developmental issues, in order to enable them to play their role as the main engine for achieving the SDGs:	<b>Agreed to the Program for the Integration of Women and Girls into the Community Development Process</b> , which aims to raise awareness, educate and train women, and provide them with all necessary services, and committed to providing the necessary support for the implementation of this program.
Children	The improvement of the quality of life for all, especially children, is the pathway for the progress of nations, and providing a decent life for children, especially those in who are displaced or refugees is important.	<p><b>Adopted the “Arab Strategy for the Protection of Children who are refugees/displaced in the Arab Region”</b> as a guide and an enforcement of their rights, improve their situation and address their living conditions.</p> <p>Stressed the need for relevant partners to work together in the field of child protection to find solutions and save an entire generation from loss.</p> <p><b>Adopted the recommendations of the study of "Child Labor in the Arab Region,"</b> in preparation for a regional strategy to combat child labor in order to address violations of children’s rights and prepare them as promising youth able to enter the market as skilled and productive employees.</p>
Private Sector	Recognizing the importance of the role of the private sector in financing sustainable development in Arab	Welcome the results of the Fourth Arab Private Sector Forum held on the sidelines of the Arab

	countries and in achieving economic and social advancement and integration:	Development Summit in Beirut, which aims to develop the aspirations of the private sector in the Arab society in order to strengthen its role as well as to promote the active role of Arab women in the Arab business community, narrow the gender gap and create more effective mechanisms to increase and develop inter-Arab trade, enhance the role of innovation, and support entrepreneurship and small enterprises, and the introduction of more initiatives that are in favor of achieving sustainable development and Arab economic integration.
Youth	The importance of empowering youth to actively participate in society by strengthening the role of youth organizations in achieving comprehensive development, which will positively impact youth, provide job opportunities and develop skills among young people, especially refugees and displaced people, as an investment in the future of the region:	Welcome the results of the Fourth Arab Youth Forum, which was held on the sidelines of the Arab Development Summit.
Civil society	Civil society is an effective partner for governments in working for development, complementing its role and integrating it in lifting the burdens and problems off of our Arab countries, in order to support our efforts to achieve sustainable development:	Welcome the results of the Fourth Arab Civil Society Forum, which was held on the sidelines of the Arab Development Summit, especially the activation of the principle of partnership between governments and civil society organizations active in the Arab world.

**Key issues highlighted in the Statements of Arab Leaders:**

Saudi Arabia: Remove trade barriers, Role of the private sector, improve inter-investment and inter-trade

Lebanon: Terrorism, Conflicts, Israeli occupation, Migration, Call for establishing Arab fund for Reconstruction

Jordan: Role of private sector, Israeli occupation, Peace and security

Palestine: Israeli occupation, Call for funding (Jerusalem, Palestine, UNRWA).

Algeria: Regional integration, Terrorism, Peace and security, Improve trade cooperation, Energy, SMEs, Women's empowerment, Education

Sudan: Food security, Integrated Arab investments, inter-trade, Arab common market, Youth forum, Public-private partnership

Bahrain: Arab Youth Forum, Arab Private Sector Forum, Food security, Conflicts and security, MOU on Arab Market for Electricity Cooperation (energy), Sectoral development in Jerusalem, Refugees and displaced persons, Trade unions, Free trade, SMEs, Digital economy, Family, Children, Women, Education, Poverty

Iraq: Regional economic integration, Terrorism, Climate change, Food security, Sustainable energy, Displaced persons, Conflicts and wars, Children

UAE: Food security, Investment and trade, Digital economy, Energy, Tourism, FfD, Innovation, ICT, Artificial intelligence, Electronic trade

Yemen: Conflict, Hunger, Displaced persons, Youth and unemployment, Children and women, Health, Reconstruction

Kuwait: SMEs, Youth, Food and water security, Electrical network, Customs union, Poverty, Unemployment, Health, Role of the private sector, Technology

Egypt: Terrorism, Poverty, Unemployment, FfD, Innovation, Education, Health, Youth, Role of the private sector, Electricity, Trade, Family

Tunisia: Conflict, Economic integration, Technology, Political approach to peace and security, Trade and investment, Migration, Displaced persons

Issue	# of times mentioned
Trade	10
Israeli occupation, Palestine, Jerusalem, UNRWA	7
Energy	7
Refugees, Displaced persons, Migration	7
Role of the Private Sector	6
Conflict	5
Youth	5

Food	5
Investment	4
Terrorism	4
Peace and Security	4
SMEs	3
Women	3
Children	3
Education	3
Health	3
Unemployment	3
Poverty	3
Economic Integration	3
Family	2
Innovation	2
FfD	2
Reconstruction	2
Digital Economy	2
Corruption	1
Hunger	1
Water	1
Tourism	1
Technology	1
Corruption	1
AI	1
Customs Union	1