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## Arab Regional Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda The Role of Parliament in Building Back Better for All

Online, 13-14 December 2021

### Information note

#### I. BACKGROUND

The compounded repercussions of the ongoing global pandemic have crowded the journey towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with numerous challenges. As a result, countries across the globe face a myriad of socio-economic and political challenges that threaten to further slowdown the sluggish progress towards achieving the SDGs and delivering on their promise to leave no one behind. These challenges can only be addressed if immediate action is taken, political processes are strengthened and renewed, and if global, regional and national institutions obtain their legitimacy from the people and work together for the common good of future generations.

Parliaments are playing a critical role in responding to the COVID-19 crisis and recovering from it. Despite the challenges, parliamentarians have carried their lawmaking, oversight, representation and budgeting roles to ensure that policies adopted responded to their constituents' priorities, and the initiatives implemented by governments were efficient, had the financial resources required, and targeted those most in need. Parliaments also demonstrated great agility and ability to adopt innovative practices to ensure that parliament continue to function in an altered reality imposed by the pandemic.

Moving forward to a post pandemic world, it is important to reflect on the lessons learned. How can parliaments accelerate progress towards more inclusive and sustainable development? How do we make sure that no one is left behind including in future crisis response? How can parliamentarians amplify the voice of their constituents in policy making in general and in crisis response in specific? What innovations and new ways of doing business are here to stay? These are some questions that would require honest and collective thinking amongst parliaments to come out from this pandemic with renewed legitimacy and a stronger role in achieving the common good.

#### II. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

##### A. OBJECTIVE OF THE 2021 FORUM

Against this background, the Arab Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda offers a timely opportunity for a regional dialogue and peer learning to examine what has worked during the pandemic and what could have been done better, and explore possible solutions to common challenges. Parliamentarians and senior staff will exchange experience and rethink their role in supporting national efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, especially in times of crises.

The Forum will also focus on the role of parliaments in ensuring that no one is left behind. To that end, the Forum will consider existing attempts to strengthen the legislative frameworks to protect the rights of older persons as one of the most vulnerable groups in the region facing an intersectionality of challenges ( health risks, poverty, exclusion,...). Participants will discuss in detail how Arab parliaments have

worked towards protecting older persons and ensuring their rights during the COVID-19 pandemic. They will also discuss how those efforts contribute to ensuring that efforts to build back better are more inclusive and responsive.

The Forum will culminate in proposing key messages that will feed into the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development for 2022 (AFSD-2022).

The Forum will be jointly organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It will build on previous joint events targeting parliamentarians in the region; namely, the [Arab Region Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda](#) held in 2019 and 2020, as well as the [Regional Seminar for Parliamentarians on 2030 Agenda](#) held in 2017.

## B. DISCUSSION TOPICS

The following issues will be discussed during the Forum:

- a) Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the progress towards achieving the SDGs in the Arab region.
- b) Parliaments' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic through their lawmaking, oversight, representative, and budgeting functions, and lessons learnt to strengthen the role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs despite crisis.
- c) Parliament's role in ensuring no one is left behind during crisis response and in efforts to build back better, with a particular focus on older persons.
- d) Parliaments' institutional responses that have enabled them to continue to function despite the restrictions on mobility and safety requirements imposed.

## III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

### A. DATE AND VENUE

In light of the continuing COVID-19 restrictions, the Forum will be held virtually over a period of two days, 13 & 14 December 2021, for a duration of 3 hours each day.

### B. WORKING LANGUAGES

The working languages of the Forum are Arabic, English and French. Simultaneous interpretation to and from the three languages will be provided.

### C. PARTICIPANTS AND REGISTRATION

The Parliamentary Forum targets parliamentarians from Arab countries, including representatives from upper and lower houses and parliamentary staff, whose work is directly related to the themes addressed by the forum. Participants will also include experts from regional and international organizations. Connection details will be sent to registered participants.

### D. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence regarding logistical arrangements should be addressed to:

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