

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2020 - A decade of accelerated action towards transformative change
UN House, Beirut, 7-9 April 2020

Information Note**I. BACKGROUND**

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (the Arab Forum) is the primary regional mechanism for the follow up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region.¹ The Arab Forum is also relevant at the global level: its outcome gives voice to the region at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The report of the Arab Forum sets out key messages emanating from the regional dialogue on the opportunities and challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda and reporting progress on key sustainable development priorities.

The importance of the Arab Forum also lies in its participatory approach. It comprises high-level representatives of ministries, bodies concerned with planning and following up on the 2030 Agenda, parliamentarians, a wide range of regional and international institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, academic and research centres and the media, among others.

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2020 (AFSD-2020) builds on the successes of six previous fora, held in Beirut in 2019 and 2018, Rabat in 2017, Amman in 2016 and 2014 and Manama in 2015. Its role and membership are set out in the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which defines the Arab Forum as the annual meeting to bring together Arab Governments and sustainable development stakeholders to discuss progress, review national and regional experiences and consider the latest developments and implementation mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional levels.²

The organization of the AFSD-2020 relies on a strong partnership with the League of Arab States, a key partner in supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. In line with the Secretary-General's call for greater coherence and enhanced synergies within the United Nations at the regional level, the Arab Forum is a joint effort of the United Nations development system. Similar to previous editions of the Arab Forum, a dedicated AFSD-2020 inter-agency task force has been set up to ensure collaboration and coordination.

¹ General Assembly [resolution 70/1](#) on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" of 25 September 2015.

² ESCWA resolutions [327 \(XXIX\)](#) (Doha, 13-15 December 2016) on the working mechanisms of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development; [314 \(XXVIII\)](#) (Tunis, 15-18 September 2014) on the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development; and 322 issued at the second meeting of the Executive Committee (Amman, 14-16 December 2015) on supporting member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2020 ON THE THEME “A DECADE OF ACCELERATED ACTION TOWARDS TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE”

A. THEME OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2020

The AFSD-2020 is implemented within the framework of ESCWA resolution [327 \(XXIX\)](#) on the working mechanisms of the Arab Forum and in line with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 7-16 July 2020 (2020 HLPF). In line with the 2020 HLPF theme of “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, the theme of the AFSD-2020 is **“A decade of accelerated action towards transformative change”**.

B. OBJECTIVE AND FOCUS OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2020

The AFSD-2020 will be held during the fifth year following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The year 2019 marked the end of the first four-year cycle of follow-up and review in which the global review of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was completed. In addition to the HLPF in July 2019 which was held under the auspices of Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC), an SDG Summit was held under the auspices of the General Assembly from 24 to 25 September 2019 in New York. The Political Declaration, which emanated from the September Summit calls for (i) accelerated action to trigger a transformative shift towards sustainable and inclusive development and (ii) operationalizing old and new commitments to sustainable development. It welcomes the adoption of the analytical framework proposed by the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (2019 GSDR) with a focus on a number of levers to accelerate implementation.

Regionally, the situational analysis provided by the inter-agency Arab Sustainable Development Report 2019 (ASDR 2019) (forthcoming), sounds the alarm that the region is not on track and far from the target of achieving the SDGs. In addition to the exacerbating effects of conflict and occupation, the report identifies significant structural barriers to the achievement of the 17 SDGs in the Arab region.

As a regional platform dedicated to the 2030 Agenda, AFSD-2020 provides a unique opportunity for review and appraisal of where Arab countries stand and what needs to be done to accelerate progress to achieve the SDGs. It is a timely opportunity for Arab countries and sustainable development stakeholders to focus on future work priorities to build on key regional development opportunities and address the many structural barriers to the achievement of all 17 SDGs in the Arab region. As most Arab countries have already established institutional frameworks for enhanced coordination and coherence and will have submitted at least one voluntary national review (VNR) by the end of 2020,³ this year’s forum will focus on what concrete actions are required to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Over three days, the programme of the AFSD-2020 on the theme “A decade of accelerated action towards transformative change” will feature a variety of plenaries, special sessions and workshop-style special events. The main components of the AFSD-2020 are as follows:

³ Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates have all presented at least one VNR. Libya, Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic will present their VNRs at the 2020 HLPF. Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen have yet to present a VNR.

Component 1 – Thematic Focus: A decade of accelerated action towards transformative change

This component of AFSD-2020 takes stock of global and regional progress on the 2030 Agenda and will focus on what concrete actions are needed to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in line with the call of the Political Declaration.

Through plenary and special sessions, this component will look at the structural barriers to achieving the SDGs in the Arab region based on findings of the Arab Sustainable Development Report 2019 and what needs to be done to operationalize the commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda and the practical frameworks necessary to address the structural barriers taking into account the recommendations as well as the levers identified in 2019 GSDR.

Component 2 – National, regional and global processes including VNRs

This component will highlight national, regional and global follow-up and review processes. In an interactive special event, VNRs will be discussed as the key national follow-up and review process with due consideration regional trends, lessons learned and the way forward. At the regional and global levels, this component will chart the input of the Arab region into the 2020 HLPF.

C. OUTCOMES OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2020

Similar to previous sessions of the Arab Forum, the outcomes of the AFSD-2020 will set out the topics discussed to highlight main messages of participating member States and other stakeholders. It will also take stock of preparatory meetings and their respective outcomes.

The final report of AFSD-2020 will be presented by the Chairperson of AFSD-2020, as the main contribution of the Arab region to the High-level Political Forum in July 2020.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

A. DATE AND VENUE OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2020

The AFSD-2020 will be held at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon, from 7-9 April 2020. Logistical details will be made available on the AFSD-2020 web page:

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/arab-forum-sustainable-development-2020>

B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

ESCWA is leading the preparation of the AFSD-2020 agenda through consultations with member States, United Nations agencies, the League of Arab States and a broad range of resource persons and experts. The draft programme will be available on the AFSD-2020 web page and updated regularly.

C. PARTICIPANTS AND REGISTRATION

Participants include high-level representatives of Arab governments, including Ministers and senior officials responsible for planning and for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In line with the theme of the AFSD-2020 and 2020 HLPF, member States' delegations may also include representatives of government institutions involved in various aspects of the SDGs including but not limited to social development, poverty alleviation, economic development, employment, environment and natural resources, data and statistics, technology and finances among others. Regional intergovernmental organizations, civil society networks and organizations, parliamentarians, academic institutions and United Nations agencies working in the Arab region and at headquarters level will also take part in this annual multi-stakeholder event. The AFSD-2020 is expected to attract around 300 participants.

To confirm attendance, please register by following this [link](#). Please make sure that you upload a clear colour copy of your passport when completing the online registration form.

Participants whose participation costs are covered by the organizers are requested to register **no later than 5 March 2020**. After this date, the logistical team will no longer be able to arrange for travel or stay.

D. TRAVEL AND ENTRY VISAS

Participants are requested to apply for entry visas directly at the Lebanese Embassy in their countries.

E. ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORT

Please note that ESCWA has identified a number of hotels in Beirut. Participants are requested to contact ESCWA for the list of hotels offering preferential rates. Please visit the web page of AFSD-2020 noted above for detailed logistical information.

F. DOCUMENTATION

In addition to background papers on the AFSD-2020's theme, forum proceedings will be informed by information and data from the following documents:

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([A/RES70/1](#));
- Political declaration of the HLPF on sustainable development, 2019;
- [Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now - Science for Achieving Sustainable Development](#);
- Global indicator framework adopted by the General Assembly ([A/RES/71/313](#)) and annual refinements contained in [E/CN.3/2018/2](#) (Annex II);
- [Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators](#) to the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission;
- [A/70/684](#) – Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level;
- [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;
- The [Paris Agreement](#);
- [Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States](#) [in Arabic only];
- [Voluntary National Reviews Handbook](#), 2020;
- United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Flagship Report, 2016 for [Policy Innovations Transformative Change: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#);
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development - 2016 [web page](#);
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development - 2017 [web page](#);
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development - 2018 [web page](#);
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development - 2019 [web page](#);

G. CORRESPONDENCE

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