

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

Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2018
Future Generations, Natural Resources and the Common Good
UN House, Beirut, Lebanon, 24-26 April 2018

Information Note**I. BACKGROUND**

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (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 This regional 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 of 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-2018 (AFSD-2018) will be chaired by the Lebanese Republic and is organized under the patronage of the President of the Council of Ministers His Excellency Mr. Saad Hariri. The Forum builds on the successes of four previous fora, held in Rabat in 2017, Amman in 2016 and 2014 and in 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 an annual meeting bringing 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-2018 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 UN Secretary-General's call for greater coherence and enhanced synergies within the United Nations development system at the regional level, the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development is a joint effort of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the Regional UNDG team. A dedicated AFSD-2018 task force has been set-up to ensure collaboration and interagency 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-2018 ON THE THEME “NATURAL RESOURCES, FUTURE GENERATIONS, AND THE COMMON GOOD”

A. THEME OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2018

The AFSD-2018 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 9-18 July 2018 (HLPF-2018). Considering the broad HLPF-2018 theme of “Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies” in the context of the Arab region, and the goals to be reviewed this year at the HLPF, the theme of the AFSD-2018 is “**Natural Resources, Future Generations, and the Common Good**”.

B. OBJECTIVE AND FOCUS OF THE ARAB FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2018

The AFSD-2018 will be held during the third year following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This regional platform provides a unique opportunity for review and appraisal of where Arab countries stand, what practical approaches have been developed, and to what extent development planning and policies are in line with the 2030 Agenda, its key principles and the SDGs. As most Arab countries have established institutional frameworks for enhanced coordination and coherence, and a large number engaged in the preparation of voluntary national reviews in 2018,³ this year’s forum is a timely opportunity for Arab countries and sustainable development stakeholders to exchange experiences, expertise and lessons learned on national and regional accomplishments, and on future work priorities in view of key regional development opportunities and challenges.

C. PROGRAMME OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2018

The programme of the AFSD-2018 on the theme “Natural Resources, Future Generations and the Common Good”, held over three days, is divided into three components:

Component 1: Implementation and Follow-Up and Review of the 2030 Agenda: National Perspectives and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

This component will include an overview and appraisal of the 2030 Agenda in its third year in the Arab region, focusing on implementation, follow-up and review at the national level and highlighting the extent of Arab countries’ response to the 2030 Agenda.

This component aims to consider the achievements of member States towards implementing the 2030 Agenda goals and targets in the Arab region by reviewing national experiences and lessons learned in the Arab region and beyond, particularly in preparing, presenting and following-up on VNRs.

Component 2: The Theme: “Natural Resources, Future Generations and the Common Good”

The second component will be dedicated to the theme of the AFSD-2018 which fits within the broader framework of the HLPF-2018 theme of *Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies* and will provide a regional focus on SDG 6,7,11,12,15, and 17, the goals to be reviewed at this year’s HLPF.⁴

³ Bahrain, Egypt, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Qatar, State of Palestine, Sudan and United Arab Emirates will present their reports in 2018.

⁴ SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, and 15 were reviewed in 2017 and SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16 shall be reviewed in 2019. SDG 17 on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development shall be reviewed every year.

The component shall comprise of four Plenary Sessions, the topics of which are as follows:

1. Integrating Natural Resources in Development Planning for a more Resilient and Sustainable Future.
2. Rethinking Economic Diversification: Safeguarding the Lives and Livelihoods of Future Generations.
3. Planning for Resilient, Inclusive and Resource Efficient Cities.
4. Financing Rights-based Sustainable Development.

Component 3: In Focus: Key Regional Priorities and the SDGs in review

The third component shall comprise of Special Sessions that shall complement the Plenary Sessions and will contribute to the overall theme of the AFSD-2018, providing in-depth analysis of selected SDGs and an opportunity to focus on key regional priorities.

D. OUTCOMES OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2018

Similar to previous sessions of the Arab Forum, the outcomes of the AFSD-2018 will set out the topics discussed to highlight main messages to participating member States and other stakeholders. It will also take stock of preparatory meetings and their respective outcomes. These include regional preparatory meetings on water, energy and the environment, the regional seminar on parliamentarians and the 2030 Agenda, and the regional civil society platform meeting.

The final report of the AFSD-2018 will be presented by Lebanon, Chair of AFSD-2018, as the main contribution of the Arab region to the High Level Political Forum in July. It will also be submitted at the upcoming ESCWA ministerial session.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

A. DATE AND VENUE OF THE ARAB FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-2018

The AFSD-2018 will be held at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon, from 24-26 April 2018. Logistical details will be made available on the [AFSD-2018 web page](#)

B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

ESCWA is leading the preparation of the AFSD-2018 agenda through consultations with member States, UN agencies, the League of Arab States, and a broad range of resource persons and experts. The draft programme will be available on the [AFSD-2018 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 and HLPF this year, member States' delegations should also include representatives of government institutions involved in natural resource management. Regional intergovernmental organisations, civil society networks and organisations, parliamentarians, and United Nations agencies working in the Arab region will also take part in this annual multi-stakeholder event. The AFSD-2018 is expected to attract around 200 participants.

To confirm attendance, please register by following this [link](#) so the list of participants can be finalized.

Participants sponsored by ESCWA are requested to register **no later than 5 April 2018**. After this date, the logistical team will no longer be able to process travel and accommodation coverage. **Please ensure you upload a clear colour copy of your passport when completing the online registration form.**

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 visit the AFSD-2018 web page to access the list of hotels and logistical information and make personal transport and accommodation arrangements in Beirut for the duration of the Forum.

F. DOCUMENTATION

In addition to background papers on the AFSD-2018's theme, forum proceedings will be informed by information and data from the following documents:

- General Assembly resolution 70/1 – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available in English and Arabic from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.
- Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to the 47th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Available in Arabic from <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-A.pdf>; and in English from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-E.pdf>.
- A/70/684 – Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. Available in Arabic from www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.60&Lang=A; and in English from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/follow-up>.
- Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Available in English from www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf.
- Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States. Available in Arabic only from www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/docs/escwa_29_11_a_0.pdf.
- UNRISD Flagship Report, 2016 for Policy Innovations Transformative Change. [http://www.unrisd.org/80256B42004CCC77/\(httpInfoFiles\)/2D9B6E61A43A7E87C125804F003285F5/\\$file/Flagship2016_FullReport.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B42004CCC77/(httpInfoFiles)/2D9B6E61A43A7E87C125804F003285F5/$file/Flagship2016_FullReport.pdf).
- [Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2016 web page](#).
- [Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2017 web page](#).

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