



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development
Amman, 2-4 April 2014

INFORMATION NOTE

I. INTRODUCTION

The year 2014 is pivotal for development. While efforts at the global, regional and national levels intensify to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, endeavors continue to define a development agenda beyond 2015 that will guide sustainable development action at the global level over the short to medium terms. The global community, including the Arab region, seems to be at an intersection where all nations, under the umbrella of the United Nations system, strive to set a post-2015 development agenda and follow up on the implementation of Rio+20 outcomes, including the definition of a single and universal set of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

In preparation for these global processes, national and regional consultative meetings, workshops and seminars were held in the Arab Region over the past year to assess the progress made by Arab countries in achieving the MDGs, and develop an Arab perspective for a post-2015 agenda that reflects their priorities and helps sustain development gains in the future.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) spared no effort in this regard, organizing a series of consultative meetings in 2013, including but not limited to: The Arab Regional Consultation on the post-2015 UN Development Agenda (Beirut, March 2013), the Arab Regional Implementation Meeting for the Twentieth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (Dubai, May 2013), the Arab Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals (Tunisia, November 2013), in addition to two workshops on Updating the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, and Developing an Arab Regional Roadmap for Green Economy Investment (Amman, August 2013).

The next substantive session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which will be held in New York, in July 2014, constitutes an important milestone on this track. Its programme will include the second session of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which was established as an outcome of Rio+ 20 to provide political leadership and guidance to sustainable development and constitute a forum for reviewing commitments and objectives related to sustainable development. In light of the mandate entrusted to all the UN Regional Commissions, including ESCWA, to lead regional preparations for this event, ESCWA and its partners the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), will organize the “Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development”, which will be generously hosted by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Amman during the period 2-4 April 2014.

Arab regional preparations for the ECOSOC substantive session are particularly important this year. Among the 70 countries participating in the inter-governmental SDG negotiations through the Open Working Group on SDGs (OWG), there are six Arab countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates.

During the Forum, a special session will be dedicated to the Arab regional preparations for the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) 2014, which is being held under the theme “*Addressing on-going and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future*”. During AMR 2014, four Arab countries (Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar and Sudan) out of a total of ten countries will provide National Voluntary Presentations that track their progress towards the MDGs.

II. ORGANIZATION

The Forum is organized in cooperation between ESCWA, the League of Arab States, the United Nations Environment Program, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, and the Ministry of Environment in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is one of several regional forums on sustainable development organized by the UN Regional Commissions in preparation for the second session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), in accordance with the mandate given to them by the UN General Assembly in its decision 67/290 on 09/07/2013.

In addition, the Forum is being organized in implementation of a resolution by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), which requested ESCWA to convene a high-level intergovernmental forum on sustainable development in the Arab region, in preparation for the next session of the UN Economic and Social Council (Resolution 114 taken during the 25th CAMRE regular session on 7/11/2013). The Forum will also include a session focusing on the Arab regional preparations for the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) 2014, in collaboration with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

III. OBJECTIVES AND MAIN THEMES OF THE FORUM

The Forum supports Arab regional preparations for the second session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which will be held within the framework of the 2014 substantive session of the UN Economic and Social Council (New York, July 2014).

Participants will be briefed about the most prominent international developments and the progress achieved in global and regional consultative processes, and future steps with regard to sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. In particular, the Forum will provide a platform to discuss the following:

- A proposal that is under preparation by ESCWA on a set of sustainable development goals for the Arab Region. The proposal reflects the outcomes of consultations led by ESCWA on the subject, in addition to the key conclusions emanating from the various regional and national consultations on the post-2015 development agenda.
- The proposed Arab Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development that ESCWA and its partners are developing at the request of CAMRE as an update of the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, which has provided a regional framework for coordinated action on sustainable development over the last decade.
- The Arab Regional Roadmap for Green Economy Investment.
- Progress made in the Arab region towards the millennium development goals and means of accelerating their achievement and sustaining gains in the future, as part of Arab regional preparations for the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) in 2014.

- Other important issues that are of relevance to sustainable development in the Arab region.

It is expected that the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) will discuss the outcomes of this Forum during a special session to be held in May 2014, following which it is hoped that these outcomes would be adopted and submitted to the next Arab Economic and Social Development Summit, in which is planned for 2015. The report of the Forum will also be submitted to the ESCWA twenty-eighth Ministerial Session (May 2014).

IV. PARTICIPANTS

High level Arab governmental representatives from the economic, social and environment sectors who are concerned with sustainable development issues will be invited to the Forum, in addition to UN development agencies active in the region, specialized agencies of the League of Arab States and regional civil society organizations that are involved in sustainable development issues.

All participants are kindly requested to complete the attached registration form before the 10th of March 2014 and send it to the contacts listed below under the correspondence section of this note.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Date and venue: The Forum will be held in Amman, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, over three days during the period 2-4 April 2014. Registration will begin at 8:30 am, while the meeting will open at 9:30 am. The venue for the Forum will be disseminated to participants in due time.

Languages: Arabic and English are the official languages of the Forum. Simultaneous interpretation between both languages will be provided.

Visa: Participants are kindly requested to obtain their entry visa to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from the Jordanian embassy in their country of residence. In case this is not possible, participants are kindly requested to coordinate with ESCWA in this regard, by providing the following documents: 1- Full color passport-size photo; 2-Colored copy of relevant passport pages (all personal information should be clear and readable). These documents need to be scanned and sent by e-mail to the addresses indicated in the correspondence section below, noting that requests for assistance must be received at least one month before the expected date of entry to Jordan.

Travel: ESCWA will issue the tickets for sponsored participants, while those who are participating in the Forum at their own expense need to make their own travel arrangements.

Accommodation and transportation: All participants are responsible for their accommodation in Amman and internal transportation from/to the Forum venue. A list of hotels offering preferential rates to Forum participants will be published on the official website of the Forum (<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNUM=3315e>) as soon as the venue has been confirmed.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence must be directed to one of the following addresses:

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