



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 April 2022

Original: English

High-level political forum on sustainable development
Convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council
5–15 July 2022
**Building back better from the coronavirus disease
(COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation
of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Report of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits, as input to the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the report of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, which was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and held from 15 to 17 March 2022.



Report of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

[Original: Arabic]

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with the League of Arab States and United Nations system entities operating in the Arab region, held the 2022 session of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, the theme of which was “Recovery and resilience”. The session, which was held both in person and virtually from Beirut from 15–17 March 2022, was chaired by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
2. The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development is the high-level regional forum for reviewing and following up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region. The previous seven sessions were held in Amman (2014 and 2016), Manama (2015), Rabat (2017), Beirut (2018 and 2019), and virtually in 2021.
3. The Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which ESCWA adopted at its twenty-ninth session (Doha, 13 to 15 December 2016), established the Forum as an annual event at which the Governments of Arab States and sustainable development stakeholders can meet to review national and regional experiences and discuss mechanisms for implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional levels.¹ Its conclusions are submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which is held annually in New York in July.
4. The forum was preceded by a series of regional meetings: (1) The Arab regional parliamentary forum on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Building back better for all (13–14 December 2021); (2) The consultative meeting on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The role of nature-based solutions in combating desertification, conserving biodiversity and strengthening resilience in the Arab Region (virtual, 16 February 2022); and (3) The Youth Forum and regional meeting of civil society organizations on sustainable development in the Arab region (12–14 March 2022).²
5. The programme of work included 11 plenary sessions on the main theme of “Recovery and resilience” and regional implementation methods. Those sessions covered the five Sustainable Development Goals that are to be reviewed at the high-level political forum (Goals 4, 5, 14 and 15, as well as Goal 17. The Forum also included 12 special sessions focused on topics of priority to the Arab region and two special events, as well as a roundtable on voluntary national reviews.
6. The discussions that took place led to the formulation of several messages that will be submitted to high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York from 5 to 15 July 2022 on the theme “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The messages were formulated from an Arab perspective, with a view to reflecting regional priorities in relation to the theme of the 2022 high-level political forum and the Goals that will be reviewed.

¹ The Forum’s terms of reference derive from a series of ESCWA resolutions, including resolution [327 \(XXIX\)](#) on the working mechanisms of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, adopted at the twenty-ninth session of the Commission; resolution [314 \(XXVIII\)](#) on the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, adopted at its twenty-eighth session (Tunis, 15–18 September 2014); and Executive Committee resolution 322 on a strategy and plan of action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the Committee at its second meeting (Amman, 14–16 December 2015).

² The Civil Society Platform on Sustainable Development organized the Youth Forum and regional meeting of civil society organizations on sustainable development in Beirut, 12–14 March 2022.

I. Key messages from the 2022 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

7. Following deliberations, Forum participants developed several messages aimed at accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda in general and the Goals reviewed in particular, other messages on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab region and ways to promote resilience. Following are the most significant messages:

Goal 4

(a) We must conduct a comprehensive assessment of poverty as it impinges on education and deprivation of education, which worsened significantly during the pandemic. These dimensions must be addressed through appropriate evidence-based policies to increase access to education services, improve the quality of teaching and provide comprehensive governance of the education system.

(b) We must make quality digital education available to all by investing in comprehensive technology infrastructure, bridging the digital gender gap, developing suitable curricula and providing support to teachers and learners. Public and private sectors must combine efforts in that regard.

(c) We must accelerate reform of education and training systems and regularly update curricula to reflect the evolving needs of the labour market and society, focusing on skills and keeping pace with technological development.

Goal 5

(a) We must continue efforts to increase women's safe access to public spaces so as to ensure women's full participation in public life, including in economic activity in emerging sectors.

(b) We must correct negative concepts of women's emancipation and gender equality prevailing in our societies through curricula, media, civic organizations and academic research.

Goal 14

(a) We must call for the implementation of integrated and transparent strategies for fisheries management and aquaculture to preserve biodiversity and maintain the sustainability of ocean-based livelihoods in Arab countries. It is important for such strategies to include solid waste management to prevent plastics from leaking into marine areas.

(b) We must strengthen cooperation mechanisms, increase funding and build regional capacities for collecting data relevant to Goal 14, and amass the information required to conserve marine resources and develop effective fisheries management strategies.

Goal 15

(a) We must take advantage of natural solutions and the opportunity provided by global mobilization on the mutually reinforcing tracks of the 2030 Development Agenda, the United Nations conventions on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation, and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

(b) We must conduct regional and interregional assessments to better understand transboundary risks, including those stemming from sand and dust storms, so as to identify regional measures to address them within a cooperative framework.

Goal 17

(a) We must call on governments to look into mechanisms for regular exchanges between ministries of planning and finance to promote coordination at all stages of the planning and budget cycles. Consideration should be given to transitioning to budgets linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

(b) We must emphasize that a comprehensive recovery entails not just more spending, but smart spending in key areas and improved management and efficiency of public expenditures.

(c) We must enhance solidarity among the countries of the region to mitigate the risks that the recent war in Ukraine is expected to cause to the Arab region, particularly with regard to food security and contributing to food reserves.

(d) We must stress the need for cooperation among the international financial institutions to promote co-financing of the requirements for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and future prevention, while strengthening international sponsorship to enable middle-income countries to get through the recovery stage.

(e) We must stress the need for comprehensive methodologies for data collection and reporting at the local and subnational levels with a view to achieving flexibility, leaving no one behind, and effectively providing information to those responsible for planning and review at the national level. Reviews must be linked to the 2030 Agenda at all levels and to oversight and accountability mechanisms such as parliaments and higher audit institutions.

(f) We must strengthen coordination among all relevant parties to increase and improve detailed data and increase utilization of data from administrative records and modern data collection technologies, including censuses.

(g) We must strengthen the partnership between government, the private sector and other stakeholders to ensure equitable, comprehensive and facilitated access for all to technological services and digital products, especially during crises, in a way that responds to the needs of those at risk of being left behind, such as women, rural residents and persons with disabilities.

Recovery and resilience

(a) We must promote dialogue and coordination among ministries of the environment, finance, the economy, planning, agriculture, energy and industry. We must also strengthen the policy and regulatory framework to attract green funding so as to achieve a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

(b) We must build the capacities of national public institutions, given their pivotal role in implementing the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus approach.

(c) We must establish a regional health market and public-private partnerships in the health sector with the aim of reducing logistical and bureaucratic barriers in the region's health supply chains while ensuring that patient rights are protected.

(d) Arab Governments must expand social protection programmes to all groups, including those most at risk, including children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, workers in the informal sector and in the rural economy, all migrant workers, refugees and people on the move, in recognition of the regional consensus on comprehensive social protection and the 2030 Agenda's principle of leaving no one behind.

(e) We must develop regulations and incentives to allow information and communication technology (ICT) startups to continue to thrive after the pandemic, particularly in sectors such as e-commerce, financial technology, delivery and logistics.

II. Sessions and presentations

8. In addition to the opening and closing sessions, 11 plenary sessions were held on the main theme of the Forum, “Recovery and resilience”. Following are the topics that were covered in the plenary sessions:

Session 1: Sustainable Development Goal 4 review: Quality education

Session 2: Sustainable Development Goal 5 review: Gender equality

Session 3: High-level dialogue: Ministries of planning and finance in conversation: Towards greater coherence for building back better and delivering the Sustainable Development Goals

Session 4: Thematic discussion on multi-stakeholder efforts for a green recovery

Session 5: Thematic discussion on recovery in the Arab least developed countries

Session 6: Sustainable Development Goal 14 review: Life below water

Session 7: Sustainable Development Goal 15 review: Life on land

Session 8: Thematic discussion on multi-stakeholder efforts driving digital transformation for sustainable recovery

Session 9: Thematic discussion on health-oriented regional supply chains to aid recovery and boost preparedness for future shocks

Session 10: Thematic discussion on social inclusion through recovery

Session 11: A special conversation with young people in the Arab region on the United Nations Secretary-General’s report “Our Common Agenda”.

9. Twelve special sessions on priority topics in the Arab region were held: (1) The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; (2) The Social Expenditure Monitor; (3) Social norms and gender-based violence; (4) Challenges and opportunities for young people in the transition from learning to decent work in the Arab region; (5) How can supreme audit institutions support recovery and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region? (6) Transboundary climate risks in the Arab region: approaches and solutions; (7) Building urban resilience to COVID-19 and climate change through innovative solutions; (8) Advancing zero hunger in the Arab region: challenges and way forward; (9) Addressing contemporary data collection methods and resources to enhance data quality for inclusive recovery and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region; (10) Technological transformation in the transport sector: challenges and opportunities for the Arab region; (11) Integrating nature into private sector investments: renewable nature-friendly energy and ecotourism in the Arab region; and (12) The role of media and advertising in promoting women’s economic empowerment in Arab countries.

10. The Forum included two special events: (1) a special event on the report on financing sustainable development in Egypt; and (2) the Digital Arab Content Award, as well as a roundtable on “Voluntary national reviews: Subnational follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and tackling inequality”.

A. Opening session

11. Mr. Nasser Shraideh, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Saudi Arabia, spoke at the opening session in his capacity as Chair of the 2022 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, as did Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and Ms. Rola Dashti, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCWA. Their remarks addressed the realities and challenges of the Arab region and efforts to strengthen resilience and recovery from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also focused on the interdependence of societies and economies and the impact of the recent crisis in Ukraine on the Arab region.

12. In preparation for the key issues to be discussed by the Forum, a documentary film was shown on the serious challenges to sustainable development in the region two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, which had exacerbated already existing structural barriers to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It presented a survey of the Goals and what was needed to overcome existing barriers and expedite their implementation.

13. Stressing the importance of regional cooperation, social solidarity and investment in the peoples of the region as a way of recovering better, ESCWA Deputy Executive Secretary Mounir Tabet facilitated the governmental part of the meeting. In that part, 14 Arab countries delivered brief statements on current or future government plans to reform and strengthen social protection systems in accordance with their commitments under the 2021 Declaration of the Arab Ministerial Forum: “The future of Social Protection in the Arab Region: building a vision for a post-COVID-19 reality” (20 November 2021) and the 2021 Riyadh Declaration: “Towards recovery from COVID-19 and support for weaker and vulnerable groups in epidemics and crises”, issued by the Conference of Ministers of Social Affairs and Arab ministerial councils on social sectors on 22 December 2021.

14. The following, in alphabetical order by State, took the floor: representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Tunisia, the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Iraq, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Lebanese Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Republic of Mauritania and the Republic of Yemen.

B. Plenary sessions

Session 1: Sustainable Development Goal 4 review: Quality education

15. The session was moderated by Ms. Karma El-Hassan, Professor of Educational Psychology Measurement and Evaluation, American University of Beirut. Panellists included: Mr. Saddam Sayyaleh, Executive Director, I Learn Jordan; Ms. Alexa Joyce, Digital Transformation and Skills Director for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Microsoft; Ms. Nawal Shalaby, Director, Centre for Curriculum and Instructional Materials Development, Egypt; and Ms. Hana Omar, Director of Community Support, King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KS Relief), Saudi Arabia.

16. The session dealt with examples of innovative initiatives by civil society and private sector stakeholders to provide education programmes and mechanisms that take into account local needs and the needs of the most vulnerable groups, as well as technological tools that ensured that the education process continued during the health crisis.

17. The session also stressed the importance of partnering with the Government and other parties in developing national curricula, and partnering with countries in the region in education initiatives targeting less developed countries.

Session 2: Sustainable Development Goal 5 review: Gender equality

18. The session was moderated by Ms. Rasha Qandeel, Anchor and TV Presenter, BBC, Egypt. Panellists included: Mr. Magued Osman, CEO and Director, Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research (Baseera), Egypt; Ms. Nicole Arian-Markazi, Head of Quality and Strategic Transformation Programmes, Middle East and Africa, Nokia; Mr. Mohamed Naji, Professor, Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Morocco; and Ms. Ohood Enaia, Head of Planning and Policies Unit, Ministry of Local Government, State of Palestine.

19. The session shed light on social considerations affecting women's participation in the labour market, promotion opportunities and equal pay. It also included discussions of actions already taken by private companies to amend their regulations, by-laws and contract offers to bring them into line with the needs of working women, with a view to increasing women's participation in the labour force and decision-making positions.

20. The session also stressed the importance of women's involvement in certain sectors, such as technology, and the importance of improving women's working conditions in the blue economy so as to increase their participation and raise their voices through the professional organizations of the sector. The session also covered the main considerations of urban planning that is sensitive to the needs of girls and women, including women workers, elderly women and women with disabilities.

Session 3: High-level dialogue: Ministries of planning and finance in conversation: Towards greater coherence for building back better and delivering the Sustainable Development Goals

21. The high-level dialogue was chaired by Ms. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, and moderated by Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and United Nations Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The dialogue session was hosted by Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, and Mr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser, Mr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser, President and Group Chairman of the Islamic Development Bank.

22. Panellists included: Mr. Marwan Al Rifai, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan; Mr. Hakim Ben Hammouda, President, Global Institute 4 Transitions (GI4T), Tunisia; Ms. Taif Sami, Deputy Minister of Finance, Iraq; His Excellency Mr. Youssef Khalil, Minister of Finance, Lebanon; Her Excellency Ms. Hala El Saeed, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Egypt; and His Excellency Mr. Waed Abdullah Badhib, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Yemen.

23. Interventions focused on the importance of government-wide cohesion and coordination to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in the face of the emerging global crisis caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war. The debate highlighted the challenges posed by these multiple crises, most notably those related to vaccines, the digital divide, increased food insecurity, high fuel prices and tighter restrictions on access to finance. Interventions also addressed opportunities presented by the pandemic, which included government plans to expand social protection programmes, digitization, sustainability and structural reforms.

24. Speakers also drew attention to integrated national finance frameworks as an important tool for supporting implementation of development plans and financing the Sustainable Development Goals. They stressed the need for Arab countries to move from shadow budgets for the Sustainable Development Goals to adopting public budgets geared towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The session also addressed the need for greater coordination with and among international financial institutions, including through strengthened partnerships, distribution of responsibilities, blended finance and shared solutions.

Session 4: Thematic discussion on multi-stakeholder efforts for a green recovery

25. The session was moderated by Mr. Jamal Saghir, Professor at the Institute for the Study of International Development, McGill University. Panellists included: Ms. Shada El-Sharif, Investment Priority Leader, Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, Jordan; Salim Rouhana, Sustainable Development Programme Leader for the Mashreq, World Bank; Ms. Noura Mansouri, Research Fellow, Energy Transition and Electric Power, King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Centre (KAPSARC), Saudi Arabia; Ms. Hajar Khamlichi, Mediterranean Coordinator, Carboun; Mr. Rami Ahmed, Special Envoy for the Sustainable Development Goals, Islamic Development Bank; and Mr. Ahmed Ali Attiga, CEO, Arab Petroleum Investment Corporation (APICORP).

26. The discussion focused on how to integrate infrastructure using green transformation methods, designing interventions for disaster-affected workers, institutions and communities, and defining energy transformation priorities for Arab financial institutions. The supply and demand for green financial instruments in the Arab region was analysed and attention was drawn to the emergence of innovative financing instruments, such as debt swap mechanisms for nature protection, green bonds and green-label loans.

Session 5: Thematic discussion on recovery in the Arab least developed countries

27. The session was moderated by His Excellency Mr. Nasser Yassine, Minister of Environment, Lebanon. Panellists included: Her Excellency Amal Saleh Saad, acting Minister of Trade and Supply, the Sudan; Mr. Mohammed Al Hawri, Advisor to the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation for economic studies and forecasts, Yemen; Mr. Abderrahaman Deddi, Assistant Director-General for Development Strategies and Policies, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Promotion of Productive Sectors, Mauritania; and Mr. Muse Mohamed Osman, Director of Planning, Ministry of Planning, Somalia.

28. Donor parties and assistance programmes were represented by: Ms. Nada Al Dossary, Director of the General Department for Media and Strategic Communication, Saudi Development and Reconstruction Programme for Yemen, Saudi Arabia; Mr. Abdallah Cheikh Sidia, Economic Advisor, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development; Mr. Abdulla Al Musaiibeh, Regional Manager for Arab Countries, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Kuwait; Mr. Ghazi Al Mutawa, Senior Researcher, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development; and Ms. Rwodah Al-Naimi, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Qatar Fund for Development.

29. The session addressed the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus approach. Participants stressed the importance of that approach in strengthening the legitimacy of governments and building community resilience. They presented their experiences applying it in practice to address hunger, for example, by carrying out structural analysis of vulnerability, identification of priorities through a collective process, and multi-year planning.

30. The session presented examples of institutional mechanisms to ensure coordination at all levels, enable government bodies and donor parties to work collectively and allocate scarce resources in an effective manner that balances real-time and long-term development needs. There was also discussion of donor funding patterns, which emphasized that they should expand in a coordinated and integrated manner, be more flexible, conform to long-term national priorities, and help to build the capacities of national institutions.

Session 6: Review of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life below water

31. This session was moderated by Her Excellency, Ms. Laila Iskandar, Former Minister of the Environment (Egypt), and Founder of CID Consulting. Panellists included: Ms. Majida Maarouf, Director General, National Agency for the Development of Aquaculture, Morocco; Ms. Nedwa Nech, Executive Director, Mauritanie 2000; and Mr. Imad Saoud, Professor of Aquatic Science, American University of Beirut.

32. The discussions focused on possible strategies for transparent and comprehensive fisheries management and sustainable management of shared resources, and the contribution of aquaculture to food security and economic development. Topics included solutions for plastic waste management, and the need to fund marine science research to enhance ocean management and ensure that the region shares in the economic benefits of new discoveries in that area.

Session 7: Review of Sustainable Development Goal 15: Life on Land

33. This session was moderated by Mr. Mostafa Fouda, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Environmental Affairs, Egypt. Participants included the following: Ms. Saliha Fortas, Director, Fight Against Desertification and the Green Dam Project, Algeria; Mr. Hassan Aldashti, Climatology Superintendent, Department of Meteorology, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Kuwait; Mr. Nizar Hani, Director-General of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, Lebanon; and Ms. Maria Selin, Head of Regional Development Cooperation (MENA), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

34. Interventions addressed ways to combat desertification and land degradation through restoration initiatives and the need for international cooperation to overcome transboundary environmental challenges. The discussion also focused on comprehensive land management approaches that balance the needs of human settlements with those of surrounding ecosystems, and the close links between the Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the other Goals of the 2030 Agenda, including eradicating poverty and hunger and promoting gender equality.

Session 8: Thematic discussion on multi-stakeholder efforts driving digital transformation for sustainable recovery

35. This session was moderated by Nermine El Saadany, Regional Vice President for the Middle East, Internet Society (ISOC), Egypt. Participants included H.E. Mr. Ishaq Sider, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, State of Palestine; Mr. Jawad Abbassi, Head of MENA, Global Association of Mobile Operators; Mr. Fadi Makki, Founder, Nudge Lebanon, Lebanon; Ms. Rasha Tantawy, Head of Entrepreneurship, TIEC/ITIDA, Egypt; and Mr. Mohamed Ben Amor, Chairman, Arab ICT Organization, Tunisia.

36. The session aimed to identify concrete policy options for the Arab region to advance digital transformation within the framework of sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussions highlighted efforts and initiatives implemented during the pandemic to accommodate the growing demand for the Internet and communication services, thereby ensuring continuity in business,

education and other sectors. The session addressed the exceptional opportunities offered by the pandemic to technological entrepreneurs and regulatory requirements to promote the growth of startups in this area.

37. The session brought together the perspectives of various stakeholders from Governments, the private sector, civil society and regional organizations. It highlighted the importance of local partnerships and regional integration among these parties, specifically in the development of digital platforms, widespread and open exchange of statistical data, and the development of systems and tools to protect users. Attention was drawn to restrictions on the State of Palestine and obstacles to the expansion 3G or 4G networks owing to the occupation, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Participants called for unrestricted use of mobile networks and other communications and Internet infrastructure networks, which would benefit both users and the national economy.

Session 9: Thematic discussion on health-oriented regional supply chains to aid recovery and boost preparedness for future shocks

38. This session was moderated by Mr. Samer Al-Madhoun, Board Member of the United Nations Global Compact Jordan and Managing Director of the Muhakat Institute, Jordan. Participants included the following: Mr. Jameel Abualeinain, General Supervisor of the General Department of Emergency, Disaster and Ambulatory Transport, Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia; Mr. Shadi Saleh, Director of the Global Health Institute and Professor of Health Systems and Financing, American University of Beirut; Mr. Nael Al-Husami, Chief Executive Officer, Amman Chamber of Industry, Jordan; and Mr. Omar Najim, Manager, Executive Affairs Office, Department of Health, United Arab Emirates.

39. The session aimed to analyse the increasing domestic production of basic medical products and equipment in the Arab countries in response to high demand during the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to address health supply chain disruptions in order to respond to the requirements of the most needy groups and ensure equitable supply.

40. The discussions highlighted the institutional plans, mechanisms and structures needed to prepare for health crises, particularly with regard to ensuring adequate supplies of consumer goods and medical needs, increasing reserves, and avoiding reliance on a single source. It also stressed the importance of collecting and processing data to track the state of health supply chains and using statistical models make adjustments in when crises break out. The session also highlighted the important role played by the private sector in increasing local production, repurposing production in certain factories and coordinating with government agencies to maintain continuity in all supply chain links and reach all segments of society equitably and at an affordable cost. The discussion emphasized the importance of regional alliances in responding to challenges in supply chains, including equitable and safe delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine to all, including less developed countries.

Session 10: Thematic discussion on social inclusion through recovery

41. The session was moderated by Ms. Hania Sholkamy, Associate Research Professor, The Social Research Centre, American University in Cairo. Panellists included: Ms. Nivine El Kabbag, Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt; Mr. Hussein Al-Sheikh, Advisor to the Minister on Social Affairs, Ministry of Community Development, United Arab Emirates; Saleh Almshaghba, Assistant Director for Policies and Strategies, Ministry of Social Development, Jordan; Mr. Abdelouahab Belmadani, Director of Planning and Financial Resources, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Morocco; Ms. Najlaa Al-Sayyad, Director of the Social Welfare Fund, and Member of the Social Protection Consultative Committee (SPCC), Yemen.

The discussant was Ms. Kaltham Ali Al Ghanim, Professor of Sociology, and Director of the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute, Qatar University. Also taking part was Ms. Maha Mazoui, who is in charge of the General Directorate of Statistics, Analysis and Strategic Planning at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Tunisia.

42. The session addressed the ways in which States expanded the coverage and funding of social protection programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic by raising programme budgets and adopting modern technologies and mechanisms to facilitate the provision of necessary funding, and delivering cash aid to beneficiaries in practical and easy ways such as cash cards, e-wallets and direct transfers.

43. The discussion also focused on challenges stemming from poor coordination between national protection programme institutions and regional and international organizations, and on the importance of building accurate, up-to-date and detailed data bases that can be relied upon to identify the groups most in need of assistance.

Session 11: A special conversation with young people in the Arab region on the United Nations Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda"

44. The session was moderated by Ms. Marwa Al Khairo, International Development Consultant and Youth Development Advisor. Panellists included: Ms. Asma Rouabhia, MENA Regional Fellow at GirlUp; Mr. Ahmad Bali, Head of Surface Water Resources Department, Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Jordan; Ms. Alaa Chbaro, Founder and CEO of WonderEd, Lebanon; Mr. Ismail Farjia, Junior Executive Manager, Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection; Ms. Rwan El-Jack, Social Media Specialist/Media and Public Relations Coordinator, Life Makers Organisation, Sudan; Ms. Sara Al Harthey, Business Development Manager, ACWA Power, Saudi Arabia; Ms. Aya Dagdou, Medical Student, Université de Monastir, Tunisia; and Ms. Tamara Al Tibi, Attorney, State of Palestine. The session also feature a video statement by Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth. The special guest at the dialogue was Mr. Jaafar Abdul Karim, Journalist, Deutsche Welle.

45. After talking about their personal experiences and the factors that led them to choose their fields of work, the participants addressed the most important changes that young people wanted and discussed the priorities that should be focused on and the solutions and partnerships required to achieve them. Discussions covered the importance of developing mechanisms to ensure that young people are involved in decision-making, investing in the green economy and technological development to provide decent employment opportunities for young people, devising solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, approaching education from a more comprehensive legal and human rights perspective, investing in education systems that promote critical thinking and skills development, promoting citizenship and gender equality, and other central issues. They stressed the importance of political will, working for peace and security in the countries of the region, capacity-building and investment in infrastructure to support the development process.

C. Special sessions

46. At the Forum, 12 special sessions were held in which certain development goals and dimensions were addressed in depth, in the light of the theme and goals of the Forum. A summary of the discussions that took place at those sessions is set out below.

Special session 1: United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration – what does it mean for the Arab region?

47. The session was moderated by Ms. Asil Al Mukhaimer, Project Manager, Jordan Association for Human Development (JAHD), Jordan. Panellists included: Mr. Khalil

Abdulhamid Abu Afifa, forestry and environment expert with the Mashriq regional office of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, representing His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Adam Al-Dukheri, Director-General of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development; Mr. Nasr Eddin Al Obaid, Director-General of the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), Syrian Arab Republic; Ms. Maya Nehme, Director of the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative, Lebanon; and Mr. El Mostafa Dafaoui, Independent International Consultant, Rangeland Natural Resources and Environment, Morocco.

48. The session highlighted the need to raise awareness of the importance of healthy ecosystems to livelihoods in the Arab region and the costs that will be borne by the region and its population if no action is taken to restore them. The session also addressed the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, what it means for the Arab region, and the need to develop an action plan and adopt long-term policies and strategies to deal with serious threats to ecosystems in the region. The session also discussed the countries' expectations of the leadership role they could play in mobilizing all relevant stakeholders to prevent, stop and reverse ecosystem degradation at the national and regional levels.

Special session 2: Social Expenditure Monitor: towards making budgets more efficient and effective to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

49. This session was moderated Mr. Ibrahim Elbadawi, Managing Director, Economic Research Forum. Panellists included: Ms. Nivine El Kabbag, Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt; Her Excellency Ms. Siham Nomsieh, Minister of Finance, Tunisia; Mr. Maher Hammad Johan, Deputy Minister of Planning, Iraq; Mr. Abdelhakim Shibli, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance, Jordan; Mr. Markus Loewe, research team leader for Middle East and North Africa research, German Development Institute; and Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director of the Arab Non-Governmental Organizations Network for Development.

50. The debate stressed that the road to a comprehensive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic entailed not only increasing spending, but also making it more efficient, a key priority for managing public spending. All stressed that targeting budgets equitably, efficiently and effectively has remained a major challenge for most governments of the region due to lack of quality monitoring, gaps in public finance management, and lack of an effective tool to support social expenditure and fiscal sustainability analysis.

51. The session considered the Social Expenditure Monitor as a useful tool for keeping decision makers inform with respect to the subject matter, outcomes and main recommendations of the upcoming report from ESCWA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on "Social Expenditure Monitor for Arab States: Towards making public budgets more equitable, efficient and effective to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals".

Special session 3: Social norms and gender-based violence

52. The session was moderated by Ms. Maysaloun Nassar, Journalist, France 24. Panellists included Ms. Lina Abou-Habib, Director of the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut; Ms. Insaf Fathallah, Education Inspector, Ministry of Education, Tunisia; Ms. Marwa Sharafeldin, Senior Advisor, Musawah; and Mr. Majd Ghraizi, Project Coordinator, KAFA, Enough Violence and Exploitation, Lebanon. Ms. Elena Panova, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Egypt, served as discussant for this session.

53. Participants addressed social norms and how they affect gender-based violence in all its forms. They discussed the role of such norms in shaping opinions and

behaviours as they relate violence against women. They addressed the challenges standing in the way of positive change in this regard, policies and measures to achieve progress and protect women and girls from violence.

54. The session touched on the experience of Tunisia in promoting positive social norms through education curricula, including through comprehensive sex education and human rights education. The session featured success stories from civil society organizations, the challenges they face in bringing about changes in social norms, and the role that young people can play in that regard.

Special session 4: Challenges and opportunities for young people in transition from learning to decent work in the Arab region

55. The session was moderated by Mr. Ahmad Khamisi, youth activist and member of the UNICEF Youth Advisory Group, Jordan. A group of Arab young people participated in the preparation, leadership and facilitation of dialogues with a number of specialists and stakeholders in the Arab region. Panellists included: Mr. Nader Kabbani, lead author of the report “The transition from learning to work” and Executive Director of Legacy Social Development Advisory; Ms. Lama Al-Natour, Head of the Development Coordination Unit, Ministry of Education, Jordan; Mr. Ghali Jorio, President of the Moroccan Youth Social Entrepreneurs Camp Group, Morocco; Ms. Samar Thawabteh, Member of the Arab Trade Union Confederation’s Young Leader Academy, Palestine; and Ms. Emmanuelle Roure, Neighbourhood Coordinator, International Affairs Unit, European Commission.

56. The session provided a platform for a discussion, led by young people, between different actors (governments, youth organizations, the private sector and donors) to reflect on the major challenges in the transition from education to work in the region in the light of the struggle by labour markets in the region to keep pace with the rapid increase in the working-age population.

57. Participants considered the need to reform education systems (formal education and vocational training) as a regional priority; the need to improve education outcomes to increase youth employment opportunities; and the development of strategies and policies to promote employability among youth, particularly in light of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, which disproportionately affected young people still in education as well as those in transition to work or in precarious work. The discussion was informed by the findings of the International Labour Organization (ILO)-UNICEF study on young people’s transition from learning to decent work in the Middle East and North Africa.

Special session 5: How can Supreme Audit Institutions support recovery and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab Region?

58. The session was moderated by Mr. Karam, Regional Advisor on Governance, ESCWA. Panellists included: Mr. Mohamed Abu Zayd, Director General, Central Auditing Organization, Egypt; Mr. Saleh Mousa Mosleh, Director General of the Department for Control of Social and Cultural Services, State Audit Administrative Control Bureau, Palestine; Mr. Agung Firman Sampurna, Chair, Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia; Ms. Archana Shirsat, Deputy Director-General, Department of Professionalism and the relevant Supreme Audit Agencies, International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) Development Initiative; Mr. Osama Al Azzam, Director-General, Cities and Villages Development Bank, Jordan; Mr. Adel Abdulaziz Al-Sarawi, Vice-President, State Audit Bureau, Kuwait and Ms. Kinda Hattar, MENA Regional Advisor, Transparency International. Mr. Arnaud Peral, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tunisia, served as discussant for this session.

59. The session highlighted the role of supreme audit and accounting institutions in supporting transparency and accountability standards and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It discussed the conditions and prerequisites needed to support them in playing a more effective role, including by reinforcing strategic partnerships among them, the executive and legislative authorities and civil society organizations to maximize the impact of audit reports. The experience of the Indonesian and Palestinian institutions was presented in that regard. The discussion explored opportunities for a stronger and more effective role for supreme audit institutions in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, and identified actions needed to empower such institutions in the delivery of a transformational, green and people-centered COVID-19 recovery that leaves no one behind.

Special session 6: Transboundary climate risks in the Arab region: approaches and solutions

60. This session was moderated by Mr. Tarek Alkhoury, Regional Coordinator, Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption and Production, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) West Asia Office, Lebanon. Panellists included: Mr. Ali Al-Dousari, Chair, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Kuwait; Mr. Nadim Farajalla, Director, Climate Change and Environment Program, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, Lebanon; and Mr. Yousif Yousif, Head, International Cooperation Department Ministry of Environment, Iraq.

61. The discussion focused on the implications of the most important transboundary risks posed by climate change in the Arab region, such as fires, locusts, storms, sand dunes, and others. There was a consensus that adaptation to climate change was not only a domestic issue, but also a shared challenge at the regional and global levels, requiring coordination and cooperation between all Arab States as well as with States neighbouring the region and all other parties concerned.

62. It was stressed that integrated solutions should be launched to reduce the risks of climate change, including spreading plant cover to expand green areas, which would help to reduce sandstorms. A proposal was put forward to establish a regional federation to deal with dust storms and coordinate efforts by countries in the region to meet that growing climate challenge.

Special session 7: Building urban resilience to COVID-19 and climate change through innovative solutions

63. The session was moderated by Mr. Elie Mansour, Head of the Urban Planning and Design Unit, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Lebanon. Panellists included: Mr. Riad Meddeb, Director ad interim of the UNDP Global Centre for Technology, Innovation and Sustainable Development (GC-TISD), Singapore; Dr. Raza Siddiqui, CEO of Arabian Healthcare Group and Executive Director of RAK Hospital, United Arab Emirates; Mr. Salaheldin Agab Sulfab Ahmed, Director of Kassala Gash River Training Unit, Sudan; Mr. Belal Shqarin, Director of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Jordan; Ms. Marwa Barakat, specialized consultant in Urban Planning and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Cairo.

64. This session highlighted city-level innovative solutions to build urban resilience as a pillar of the recovery from the pandemic and confronting climate threats. It looked at successful responses in Arab cities with diverse challenges and contexts, including conflicts and varying income levels (high and middle) to support recovery and the building of resilient cities by focusing on four thematic areas: climate risk reduction, water management, infrastructure and health management. The session also addressed the pillars of integrated urban innovation and flexibility, resilience, as

well as emerging gaps encountered, and recommendations that could be submitted to city councils, governments and communities.

Special session 8: Advancing zero hunger in the Arab region: The challenges and the way forward

65. The session was moderated by Mr. Jean-Marc Faures, Regional Programme Leader, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), regional office for Near East and North Africa. Opening remarks were delivered by Ms. Nada Al-Ajisi, Director of the Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, League of Arab States; Mr. Abdulhakim Elwaer, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Near East and North Africa; and Kate Newton, Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, World Food Programme (WFP).

66. The keynote address was delivered by Wadid Erian, Professor, Cairo University, and Senior Advisor for Sustainable Development, League of Arab States. Panellists included: Ms. Rasha Al-Ardi, health management expert, UNICEF; Mr. Saad Hatem Al-Maaini, Chair of the Committee for Developing the National Food Security Strategy, Iraq; Ms. Fatima Elhassan Eltahir, Secretary-General, Technical Secretariat for Food Security, Sudan; and Mr. Mohamed Ait-Kadi, President of the General Council of Agricultural Development, Morocco.

67. The session addressed the status of Sustainable Development Goal 2 in the region, progress in eradicating hunger and preventing malnutrition in all its forms, and persisting challenges. The Strategic Framework for Zero Hunger in the Arab Region, launched in February 2022 with a view to strengthening collaboration between Arab countries, supporting the regional policy dialogue, and developing strategies on sustained food and nutrition security, inclusive agricultural growth and socioeconomic development.

68. The discussion focused on the factors that might help to eradicate hunger in the region, prevent all forms of malnutrition and build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of the Sudan and Morocco were presented, along with the experience of Iraq, with a focus on its national food security strategy currently under development.

Special session 9: Addressing coordination challenges and contemporary statistical data collection methods and resources to enhance data quality for inclusive recovery and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region

69. The session was held in two parts. Part 1 was moderated by Mr. Haidar Fraihat, Leader, Statistics, Information Society and Technology Cluster, UN-ESCWA. Speakers included the following: Ms. Neda Jafar, Head, Statistical Policies and Coordination Unit, UN-ESCWA; Mr. Mohamed Saeed Almohannadi, Director of Statistics Department, Planning and Statistics Authority, Qatar; and Ms. Nabila Maachou, Director of Studies, Algerian Accountability Council, Algeria.

70. Part 2 was moderated by Mr. Nabil M. BenShams, Director General, the Statistical Centre of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC-Stat), Oman. Panellists included: Mr. Louay Shabana, Regional Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for Arab States; Ms. Sawsan Bint Daoud bin Mahmoud Al-Letita, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Information at the National Centre for Statistics and Information, Oman; Mr. Haidar Freiha, ESCWA; Mr. Zia Kazim, Head of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Iraq; and Ms. Irina Vogakova-Solorano, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iraq.

71. The first part of the session highlighted Sustainable Development Goal indicators gaps, which are often exacerbated by poor coordination in national

statistical systems in the Arab region. Presentations were made on the experiences of Qatar and Algeria in improving the availability and quality of data.

72. In the second part, participants discussed progress made in conducting population and housing censuses in Arab countries. By considering the experience of Iraq, they addressed the challenges and difficulties facing many countries, including the COVID-19 outbreak. The experience of Oman experience in the use and revamping of administrative records for statistical purposes was presented, with an emphasis on partnerships, defining the responsibilities of different parties, creating electronic links between different records, and maintaining the confidentiality of data. The session drew attention to the importance of conducting censuses, the adoption of modern technologies, and the use of alternative methodologies in countries where censuses were impossible to conduct for political or economic reasons.

Special session 10: Technological transformation in the transport sector: challenges and opportunities for the Arab Region

73. The session was moderated Mr. Yarob Badr, Regional Advisor on Transport and Logistics, ESCWA. Panellists included: Ms. Nibal Idlebi, Chief of Innovation Section, ESCWA; Khalid Al Hogail, President of the Arab Union for Land Transport, Jordan; Mr. Mahmoud Al Abdullatt, VicePresident, International Road Transport Union, Turkey; Mr. Moustafa Hani Shakib, Strategy and Business Excellence Manager, Almajdouie Logistics Company, Saudi Arabia; Mr. Rami Karout, Advisor for the Middle East and North Africa, International Road Transport Union (IRU), Switzerland; and Mr. Khaled El Sakty, Dean of the College of International Transport and Logistics, Arab Academy of Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, Egypt.

74. The discussion focused on the crucial role digital technology plays in developing and improving means of transport, and on the long-term economic returns it will yield despite its high short-term cost. It was emphasized that notwithstanding losses suffered by the transport sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, it had offered major opportunities because of the measures it had necessitated and the limitations it imposed. It had led to improved transport services through increased use of new digital technologies to implement contactless transactions and clearances, reduced traffic crashes and reduced noise and air pollution while developing sustainable transport systems that ensured the safety of users. However, as some of the panellists pointed out, further adoption of technology in the transport sectors would require the development of new laws and regulations and increased awareness and capacity on the part of transport workers. They noted the importance of information exchange among countries in the region on transport operations, which could help to manage risks and enhance efficiency. At the same time, it was proposed to establish an Arab fund for research and development in the field of artificial intelligence in transport and logistics.

Special session 11: Integrating nature into private sector investments: Nature-sensitive renewable energy and ecotourism in the Arab region

75. The session was moderated by Mr. Adel Soliman, Assistant Director of the Migratory Soaring Birds Project, UNDP, Egypt. Panellists included: Ms. Yulia Isaeva, Regional Climate Change and Environment Specialist, UNDP, Jordan; Mr. Osama Al Nouri, Project Manager, Migratory Soaring Birds Project, BirdLife International, Jordan; Mr. Tris Allinson, Senior Global Science Officer, BirdLife International, United Kingdom; and Mr. Faisal Eissa, General Director, Lekela Egypt, Egypt; Mr. André Béchara, Owner and CEO, Great Escape, Lebanon.

76. The session highlighted lessons learned and best practices developed through the Migratory Soaring Birds project implemented by BirdLife International in cooperation with UNDP. The discussion addressed a mechanism for supporting the

project for partner countries along the Red Sea/Rift Valley flyway, including the five Arab States of Jordan, Djibouti, the Sudan, Lebanon and Egypt, to mainstream nature-sensitive solutions into the renewable energy and tourism sector investments with focus on partnerships with the private sector. Participants' attention was drawn to the importance of the Red Sea/Rift Valley flyway for migratory soaring birds. Sensitivity maps could help identify sites for wind farms and solar parks, with a view to minimizing the risks that infrastructure at such sites might pose to birds. It was emphasized that ecotourism and birdwatching could provide economic opportunities for communities and turn them into refuge protectors.

Special session 12: The role of media and advertising to promote women's economic empowerment in the Arab States

77. The session was moderated by Ms. Rasha Qandeel, bilingual lead presenter, BBC News Arabic, Egypt. Penallists included: Ms. Carla Sertin, Group Editor – Energy & Construction, ITP Media Group, Lebanon; Ms. Natalie Shardan, Managing Director, Serviceplan Middle East; Ms. Rana Ahmad, Senior Copywriter Serviceplan Middle East; and Ms. Valentina Bollenback, Regional Director, Magenta Consulting.

78. The discussion addressed media as a key enabler to advance women's economic empowerment and leadership by contributing to the regional discourse with content that amplifies women's and girls' voices and experiences and challenges harmful gender stereotypes and social norms. The discussion highlighted initiatives such as the UN-Women Media Compact and the Women's Empowerment Principles that provide private sector entities with the tools they need to create gender-sensitive workplaces.

D. Special events

79. The Forum included two special events: (1) A special event on the report on financing sustainable development in Egypt and (2) The Digital Arab Content Award, as well as a roundtable on "Voluntary national reviews: Subnational follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and tackling inequality".

Special event on the report on financing sustainable development in Egypt

80. The session was moderated by Ms. Hania Sholkamy, Associate Research Professor, The Social Research Centre, American University in Cairo. Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Executive Director at IMF and United Nations Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Agenda, presented the report on financing sustainable development in Egypt.

81. Discussants included: Mr. Navid Hanif, Director Financing for Sustainable Development Office, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Mr. Sylvain Merlen, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP, Egypt; and Mr. Khalid Abu-Ismael, Senior Economist, Poverty and Human Development, ESCWA.

82. This regional discussion aimed to present the results of the report on "Financing for Sustainable Development in Egypt", including the overall status of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF), public financial flows, debt management, trade and the localization of sustainable development.

83. The special event also aimed to launch the next phase of coordinated action on proposed reforms to finance sectoral sustainable development plans and macroeconomic frameworks in Egypt within a locally designed integrated national financing framework that supports the second wave of structural reforms and the transition to a structural shift focused on the Sustainable Development Goals. The

special event was also intended as a springboard to advance the report as a prototype for replication across the Arab region and beyond.

The Arab Digital Content Award

84. This session was set aside to announce the results of the 2021 ESCWA Digital Arabic Content Award. It explained the goals of the award, conditions for participation, criteria for evaluating content, and the role of the steering, judging and media committees, as well as the two categories, which were the “Institutions” category and the “Young Entrepreneurs” category.

85. The Institutions category included existing Arabic digital content products that support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals developed by public or private sector institutions, academia, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations or other stakeholders. The Young Entrepreneurs category included new Arabic digital content products developed by young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 35 that support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

86. Winners in the Institutions category were as follows: Easy Laws, Lebanon; Kamkalima, Lebanon; Mahara-Tech, Egypt; Jeel App, Egypt; and Madrasa e-Learning Platform, United Arab Emirates. Winners in the Young Entrepreneurs category were as follows: Alkhattat Platform, Saudi Arabia; Sounddeals Platform, United Arab Emirates; and Basma: Smart Education System, Kuwait.

Roundtable on voluntary national reviews: Subnational follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and tackling inequality

87. The session was moderated by Ms. Jana El Baba, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCWA. Mr. Akram Khraisat, Director of the Urban Observatory, Greater Amman Municipality, Jordan; Ms. Mona Fayed, Head of the Sustainable Development Unit, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Egypt; Mr. Muhammed Al Sayyed, Director General of Regional and Local Development, Ministry of Planning, Iraq; Ms. Yaqeen Jomaa, Director of Planning, Dhi Qar Governorate, Iraq; Mr. Mustafa Khawaja, Statistics Expert, Palestine; and Mr. Yehia Ibrahim, Committee on Social Inclusion, United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section.

88. The session highlighted the experiences of Jordan, Iraq and Egypt in conducting local or subnational voluntary reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on mechanisms and methodologies. Those experiences have demonstrated the usefulness of such reviews locally, in terms of helping to involve communities localizing the 2030 plan in an open, comprehensive and transparent manner, and have proven to be useful on the national level as an assessment tool to support national planning that leaves no one behind and tackles inequality. There was also discussion of statistical challenges at the local level, with emphasis on the roles different stakeholders can play in addressing the data divide. The attention of participants was drawn to successful experiments in the region and beyond in which local governments incorporated the rights of marginalized groups such as migrants and children into implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level.

E. Closing session

89. In closing, the Chair of the Forum, Mr. Nasser Shraideh, thanking ESCWA and its partners at the League of Arab States and the United Nations Organization for organizing the Forum, said that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan would transmit the outcomes to the high-level political forum to be held in New York in July 2022 and

would endeavour to ensure that they featured prominently in the ministerial declaration to be adopted at that event.

90. Ms. Dashti thanked the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for chairing the Forum and all participants and partners for contributing to its success. She stressed that ESCWA had confidence in the promising role that young people could play and that ESCWA was committed to adopting a participatory approach with all Arab countries and regional and international partners to achieve prosperity and human dignity in the Arab region.

III. Participants

91. Some 2,447 participants (219 in person at the United Nations House in Beirut and 2,228 virtually online) attended the Forum, including high-level representatives of governments and parliaments, civil society, youth groups, think tanks, the private sector, regional organizations from the Arab world and beyond, regional actors involved in sustainable development, audit institutions, funds in the Arab region, a number of media organizations, and the organizing entities, namely, United Nations agencies and organizations operating in the Arab region, the League of Arab States and ESCWA.

92. Twenty-one Arab States attended, represented either in person or virtually, by delegations from Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

93. The United Nations was represented by the Deputy Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, and by representatives of FAO, ILO, the International Organization for Migration, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UN-Women, WHO, WFP, and a large number of United Nations resident coordinators from Arab countries.

Annex**Outcome documents of the preparatory meetings for the 2022 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development**

Arab Region Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, held in December 2020

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/2021-arab-regional-parliamentary-forum-2030-agenda>

Consultative meeting on the environmental dimension of the sustainable development agenda, 16 February 2021: The role of nature-based solutions in combating desertification, conserving biodiversity and strengthening resilience in the Arab region, 16 February 2022

<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/Meeting%20Report%20Final.pdf>

The Youth Forum and the regional meeting of civil society organizations on sustainable development in Beirut, 12–14 March 2022

<https://annd.org/en/activities/details/safir-youth-forum-12-13-14-march-2022-beirut>
