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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

## **Regional Seminar for Parliamentarians in the Arab Region on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** Beirut, 8 – 9 November 2017

### **Information note**

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for an integrated multi-stakeholder approach in addressing development challenges, and in driving transformative change for an inclusive and just world where no one is left behind. The Agenda demands the robust engagement of an expanding group of actors, including parliamentarians, in driving sustainable development and monitoring and following up on progress at the national level. UN entities facilitate this engagement by raising the awareness of actors and stakeholders on the Agenda and their roles in supporting its implementation, at national and regional levels, and building their capacity to carry out their respective functions.



We acknowledge also the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments. Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, subregional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others.

Article 45 of the General Assembly Resolution 70/1 Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



Parliamentarians from around the world took part in post-2015 processes that produced the 2030 Agenda. Articles 45, 52 and 79 of the Agenda explicitly acknowledge the important role of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Agenda, both as representatives of the people as well as development actors working for sustainable development at the national level. In addition, the Agenda explicitly identifies good governance as both a goal and an enabler of sustainable development: a number of targets demand responsive

and inclusive institutions and practices of governance. Goal 16 commits countries to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” More specifically, Target 16.6 focuses on “effective, accountable and transparent institutions,” and Target 16.7 calls for “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.”

**Parliamentarians in Arab countries have the potential, and the responsibility, to play an active role in supporting the implementation of the Agenda.** Across their different functions of representation, legislation, oversight, and budgeting, parliamentarians ensure accountability and inclusivity and transparency as countries work to achieve sustainable development for all.

## II. EMPOWERING PARLIAMENTARIANS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

ESCWA and UNDP have the mandate and the expertise to support countries of the region in implementing the Agenda and in building the capacity of the different actors and stakeholders. In partnering together to empower parliamentarians in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the two organizations have the following goals:

1. Strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians in the Arab region in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
2. Strengthen the performance of Arab Parliaments as responsive, inclusive, and supportive of sustainable development.

As a first step in empowering parliamentarians in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA and UNDP will organize a **Regional Seminar for Parliamentarians in the Arab Region on the 2030 Agenda, scheduled to take place on 8-9 November 2017, at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon.** Further activities will carry these goals forward, with more focused capacity building, peer learning and networking opportunities for parliamentarians at the national and regional levels.

## III. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

### A. FOCUS OF THE REGIONAL SEMINAR

The Regional Seminar addresses the role and capacity needs of Parliamentarians in the Arab region in the implementation of the Agenda and in accordance with the different functions carried out by Parliament: representation, legislation, budgeting, and oversight.

The Seminar will take as its focus the broader framework of the Agenda 2030 and not only the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This broader framework includes the preamble and the package of preparatory documents, global and regional, that facilitated the production of the Agenda. The Seminar will also feature the publication “Parliament’s Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: A Parliamentary Handbook”, which was developed by UNDP, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC).

### B. OBJECTIVE OF THE REGIONAL SEMINAR

The Seminar will enhance the awareness of parliamentarians in the Arab region of the importance of their role in the implementation of the Agenda as well as the different ways in which their work could serve implementation and follow-up and review at both the national and regional levels.

Specifically, the Seminar will familiarize the participants with the different elements of the Agenda (SDGs; Follow-up and Review and Voluntary National Reviews; Indicators; Means of Implementation), relevant regional and global fora (the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and the High Level Political

Forum), and the intersection of the functions of parliamentarians with the implementation of the Agenda. Examples of Parliamentary engagement with the Agenda include the drafting of laws that ensure inclusivity and sustainability, monitoring budget preparation and public spending in line with agreed priorities, ensuring a multi-stakeholder and consultative approach to policy-making, etc. In addition, parliamentarians have a crucial role in shaping development planning at the national level so it is inclusive and sustainable. The Seminar will also set the stage for further targeted capacity building and training by outlining needs and challenges, and the possible formulation of a regional network or networks of parliamentarians with a focus on specific aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

#### C. PROGRAMME OF THE REGIONAL SEMINAR

This first Seminar will provide an overview of the 2030 Agenda and will focus on the role of parliamentarians in engaging with the Agenda, including its implementation and the process of follow-up and review. It will use concrete examples from the region and elsewhere to illustrate the ways in which parliamentarians can engage with the Agenda in their work. And it will familiarize participants with the global context for implementing the Agenda. To that effect, sessions will cover the following main areas:

1. An introduction to the global process that launched the 2030 Agenda and its different components, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Means of Implementation and the process of Follow-up and Review;
2. An exploration of the different Parliamentary entry points to engage with the 2030 Agenda, including representation, legislation, budgeting and oversight;
3. An assessment of the opportunities and challenges of engaging with the Agenda in the region from a Parliamentary perspective;
4. The formulation of a draft Action Plan to enhance Parliamentary engagement with the Agenda, including capacity building for parliamentarians and parliamentary institutions in Arab countries.

#### D. OUTCOME OF THE REGIONAL SEMINAR

The Seminar will conclude with a set of recommendations and a draft Action Plan to support parliamentarians in engaging with the 2030 Agenda through detailed proposals for engagement at the national and regional levels. The Action Plan will also include a set of activities for capacity building for parliamentarians to be provided by UN ESCWA and UNDP and their partners.

### IV. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

#### A. DATE AND VENUE

The Regional Seminar will be held at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon, on 8 and 9 November 2017.

#### B. WORKING LANGUAGES

Arabic and English are the working languages of the Seminar. Simultaneous interpretation for both languages will be provided.

#### C. PARTICIPANTS AND REGISTRATION

The Seminar targets parliamentarians from the majority of Arab countries, including representatives from upper and lower houses. Participants will also include experts from regional and international

organizations and United Nations entities. To confirm attendance, please complete the online registration form before **16 October 2017** through the below link:

<https://participant.escwa.org.lb/MeetingsReg.aspx? M=7hI2k3E4tpI=& N=N& O=N>

#### D. DOCUMENTATION

Confirmed participants will receive an annotated agenda and supportive materials in due time. Documents will be made available online at the following website:

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/seminar-parliaments-arab-2030-agenda>

#### E. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

All participants are expected to inquire about their visa requirements to Lebanon and secure one ahead of their anticipated travel date. ESCWA can provide assistance in exceptional cases upon request. Travel details will be communicated to participants upon confirmation of attendance.

#### F. CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence regarding the Regional Seminar should be addressed as follows:

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