The Arab Development Forum, held on 10 and 11 April, 2013, in Amman, Jordan, was a consultation convened by the Regional United Nations Development Group to gather the views of civil society from across the Arab region on a new development agenda to build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Forum was held under the patronage of Queen Rania al Abdullah of Jordan, who as a Member of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda has taken a leading role in advocating for an inspiring and ambitious future development framework.

Over 200 participants from 18 Arab countries took part in the consultation. Their input was frank, grounded, and inspirational. And their message was clear: The Arab region is changing quickly and the time is ripe for a truly transformational development agenda.

The Post-2015 Agenda which civil society called for in this Forum would build on the strengths of the MDGs while also making refinements and additions that help trace an even more relevant outline for the Arab region’s path towards sustainable human development.

In areas such as poverty, health, and education which were covered by the MDGs, there is a need to revisit targets and indicators to ensure that they can be relevant for all regions and countries, and within countries; that they capture not only quantitative information but qualitative, too; and that they monitor not only aggregate data but also disaggregated data which can bring inequalities of all kinds into view.

Participants also called for areas which were at the heart of the Millennium Declaration to be better reflected in the next global development framework. This includes governance issues such as voice and participation; issues related to peace, security, and national self-determination; and a fuller embrace of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In this sense participants are clear that there should no longer be a gap between long-standing normative and legal frameworks, and the development goals that governments set. Indeed, the latter should serve as part of a road map for the achievement of the former.

Participants also presented the view that all development is interconnected. In particular the next development framework must reflect the inter-dependencies of social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This is of critical importance as the Post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals processes begin to come together as one.

Looking ahead to implementation, participants were clear in the view that civil society is ready, willing and able to contribute more to the definition of policy and the achievement of
progress than they have been enabled to in the past in the Arab world. Development cannot be achieved by government alone. Sustainable human development requires the joint efforts of all stakeholders – nationally, regionally, and globally.

Naturally these views will present the architects of the Post-2015 framework with a number of conceptual and methodological challenges. But ambitions must be high. The MDGs played a major role in galvanizing actors around a common and meaningful set of common goals. However the world is different today than it was when the MDGs were rolled out, and the time has come for a global development framework that helps us all move together towards the world we want.

I am pleased that the report is issued in time to inform the various processes underway around the world to generate ideas for the next development framework. In particular I hope it will be of use to United Nations Member States as they discuss the way forward at the MDG Review Summit during this year’s General Assembly, and as the Open Working Group accelerates in its important deliberations to shape the next development framework.

Ultimately the next development framework will be defined by Member States working together to find common ground. However the United Nations Development Group has an important role in ensuring the process is as consultative as possible and is informed by evidence on people’s priorities. I am thankful that the civil society participants in this Arab Development Forum answered our call with such passion and insight, building on the body of information we have gleaned from facilitating national consultations in 9 Arab countries, and from the over-10,000 people in the Arab region who have marked their views in the global MyWorld Survey. I hope that this Report from the Arab region contributes effectively to a process towards a new development framework which is truly inspiring — for every country, every region and the world as a whole.

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Thanks also go to the Chair of the UNDG and UNDP Administrator Helen Clark for her inspiring opening remarks which placed the event well in the global Post-2015 discourse.

Further thanked are the many participants from civil society who travelled far to share their voices. They engaged with passion, clarity of vision and a resolute view that progress is possible. The Regional UNDG look forward to continuing to engage with civil society across the Arab world as key stakeholders in shaping the world we want.

Gratitude goes to the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Al Hindawi, who gave voice to the perspective of youth as drivers of development at this critical juncture.

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The UNDG is additionally grateful to the Al-Arabiya news channel for broadcasting the Hewar Al Arab panel discussion on the Post-2015 Development Agenda during the Arab Development Forum, thus contributing to the advocacy and call for engagement needed to ensure the Post-2015 Agenda is truly regionally owned.

Last but not least, the UNDG Secretariat thanks the presenters, moderators and rapporteurs who helped capture the discussions and reflect them in this report, and all of our colleagues who worked so hard to make this such a useful event.
The Arab region is currently undergoing the most profound wave of change of its modern history. Women, men, and youth around the region have voiced demands for political and economic inclusion, increased opportunities and social mobility, and a relationship between state and society forged on human rights, social justice, equality, voice and participation, and accountability. Some countries are undertaking the beginnings of transition; others are experimenting with new kinds of reform.

These changes are coinciding in some cases with significant frictions. Several countries are experiencing difficulties in arriving at consensus on the way forward. Socio-economic needs are mounting in many countries. In some cases new pressures on social cohesion or political consensus have surfaced, reflected in new types of conflict, violence or unrest.

As the Arab region navigates this complex period its prospects are shaped also by deep drivers and underlying factors such as demographic, technological, and social change; institutional challenges rooted in decades of relatively insular political, economic and social systems; long-standing development deficits revealed in stubborn poverty, high levels of unemployment, and broad inequities across the spectrum of the development experience; and an unsure international environment that continues to pose risks of many kinds.

As the world pursues a transformational development agenda to build on the Millennium Development Goals, voices in the Arab region are calling for a framework that helps bring these myriad challenges into focus, and provides the basis for participatory national development and principles-based regional and global cooperation to meet shared goals derived from a vision that is globally, regionally and nationally owned.

In this context the Regional UNDG brought together over 200 participants from 18 Arab Countries to discuss priorities and articulate their priorities and views for the emerging Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Core Principles of a new development framework:
While working groups were organized by specific development themes, a key overall message coming from the Forum is the interconnectedness of all dimensions of sustainable human development. Participants clearly articulated the importance of sustainable development as the integration of sustainable environment, economic and social development. Participants similarly voiced that any development framework must fully reflect and build upon the values enshrined in the UN Charter and international human rights covenants, and reflected in the Millennium Declaration itself. Five such values stood out as particularly important to voices in the Arab region:
> **Equity:** Concern with inequalities of all kinds was voiced in each session. Inequalities are obstacles which prevent fair access to livelihoods, education, and resources as well as full participation in political and cultural life. They magnify the challenge of creating sustainable prosperity and diminish the space for individuals, households, and communities to seek the mix of economic, social, and ecological assets that best meets their needs. Inequalities are prevalent in education, health and labour markets, and stand as a new iteration of poverty challenges, a driver of conflict, and as a gap between men and women. They persist in the Arab world and are often deeply rooted in discrimination and injustice, for example in differential access to legal systems or social and economic resources. They can be politically entrenched and passed from one generation to the next. Inequalities affect not only marginalized people, but are pervasive and corrosive for society as a whole. Equity must be a pillar of the Post-2015 Agenda.

> **Resilience:** The Arab region has witnessed numerous shocks and stresses brought upon by conflicts and upheaval, including those driven by internal political and social factors as well as those involving invasion and occupation by external actors; by economic shifts such as increasing vulnerability to food-price shocks; by environmental degradation, including the impacts of climate change; and by underlying resource scarcity, particularly with respect to water and arable land. The potential for new conflicts persists as the region’s political architecture is reshaped, and population dynamics change. As global patterns shift and as new stressors emerge, this continuously fragile context impacts the region, its natural resources and, most of all, its people. There is a need for institutions to incorporate adaptive strategies with the culture and ethics of communities as starting points, bolstered by essential institutional and financial investments across multiple sectors. Incorporating the principles of resilience within the Post-2015 framework will help maintain focus in the region on addressing vulnerabilities and setting up systemic responses to help cope with change.

> **Sustainability:** Environmental change affects all the MDGs and is one of the greatest threats facing communities across the Arab region as they seek to achieve and sustain development beyond 2015. The Arab region faces the world’s highest levels of water and food insecurity, and some of the most serious risks from climate change. A majority of the region’s poor households lacks access to sustainable energy. As highlighted at the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Conference and related dialogues in the Arab region, greater efforts are needed to integrate issues of resource security and environmental change into new development goals and policies taking shape globally and across the region. This is all the more urgent as the region’s population continues to grow, from the 2010 level of 357 million people to a projected 468 million by 2025.
Accountability: Driven by the momentous role of young people, the Arab region is engaged in a transformation towards increased public accountability and inclusion. This important dynamic permeated the discussions in every working group during the Arab Development Forum. Societies across the region demand that political, social and economic institutions at local, national, regional and international levels be accountable and inclusive. This goes beyond governments alone, as businesses and multilateral institutions, including the United Nations system, must also ensure a high standard of accountability and transparency. It is clear from the Forum that to be credible the global debate on Post-2015 must show more ambition in the direction of human rights, including through stronger mechanisms to hold duty-bearers to account.

Participation: Changes in the region call for a paradigm shift on the basis of a new social contract forged on shared responsibilities between government and citizen. The call for transparent processes and open channels to facilitate participation is driven by a very deep notion of shared responsibilities at all levels, a recurring theme throughout the Arab Development Forum.

Accelerating the MDGs
The Arab region has seen mixed progress against the MDGs, with the region’s Middle Income Countries (MICs) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) lagging furthest behind, and overall progress slowing since 2010 amidst the global economic downturn and regional instability. With less than 1000 days left to the MDGs target date, there is a need to revive and accelerate progress towards the existing targets, with specific attention to extreme poverty and hunger and the improvement of maternal health.

Looking ahead: Existing goals need refinement
Participants affirmed that basic issues such as income poverty, food security, education and health remain relevant and should feature strongly in a future development framework. However more relevant targets and indicators than those used in the MDGs are needed if future goals are to properly frame challenges and critical issues for the region.

> A future goal on poverty reduction, for example, should allow countries or regions flexibility in setting the targets. The current indicator of US$1.25-per-day leads to underestimates of poverty in the Arab region. While only 7.4% of people in the Arab region live under that amount, a full 20% live on less than US$2 per day, an amount that is equally insufficient for basic needs and dignity in the Arab region. Additionally, beyond monetary measurements, the defining parameters for the poverty line should incorporate considerations such as food security and adequate standards of living that preserve human dignity as factors.
Employment goals should feature more directly in the future framework. The Arab region has among the highest unemployment rates in the world. Young men and women in particular are an untapped resource and need proactive efforts to engage constructively in society.

Indicators should allow for monitoring of quality. Although many Arab countries have made progress on increasing access to basic services, participants voiced that rapid expansion has coincided with a deterioration of standards. A future goal framework should benefit from the experience of the MDGs and put more emphasis on the quality of social development rather than a sole focus on quantitative progress. This applies in particular to the quality of education, the quality of water, and the quality of health services, particularly for women.

National aggregates conceal social exclusion. There is a need to bring inequalities into view – at the regional, national and sub-national levels and across social typologies. The Arab region is more diverse in terms of national income than any other in the world. Countries such as Qatar lead in world income ranking-tables and countries such as Yemen or Djibouti are among the poorest in the world. In many Arab countries, poverty is highly-concentrated in rural areas. Gender-disaggregated targets can also bring to light inequalities and track disparities between women and men.

Issues of resource security and climate change should be in stronger focus in the Post-2015 framework. This is seen as critical for the Arab region in particular given its position as the most water-insecure region in the world.

Looking towards an expanded Agenda
In addition to these refinements to the current goals, delegates called for a future development framework to also reflect the importance of a broader agenda, including issues featured in the Millennium Declaration but not translated into the MDGs.

Voice, participation and good governance, including in the management of natural resources, are seen not only as human rights but also as enablers of sustainable human development that should be reflected in a future framework.

Social cohesion, freedom from violence, conflict resolution and mediation, and an end to occupation are pre-requisites for making progress on goals, alongside the need to foster citizenship and strengthen respect of diversity.
Partnership and financing for development need to be better captured in a future development framework, with emphasis on global initiatives such as the UN Secretary-General’s global strategy on women and children’s health. Given changes in the global economic structure, South-South partnerships and public–private–civil society partnerships need to be much more vibrant than they have been during implementation of the MDG framework.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are goals on their own and are widely recognized preconditions to achieving all other development outcomes. The new development framework will need to feature a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment, while also mainstreaming the same into goals, targets and indicators in all sectors. It will also need to address the absence of targets in the MDGs on violence against women and legal rights.

Regional cooperation is seen as a key driver of development progress, and the process towards the Post-2015 Agenda will be most useful if it is to catalyse increased regional social and economic cooperation across countries in the Arab region.

The Role of Civil Society

Civil society participants in the Arab Development Forum clearly articulated a demand to be consulted and engaged in meaningful partnership in shaping development commitments and in delivering results in a context of enhanced accountability.

The message coming out of this Forum was clear — the changes underway in the Arab region underscore the need for a renewed social contract supported by a call for equal dignity of all citizens and an equality of opportunity to participate in public affairs. Civil society across the Arab region, including youth and women, are often a driving force for positive change in their communities but face serious obstacles to their full engagement in public processes.

The vision of civil society is that the Post-2015 framework is to be seen as a call to action for the pluralistic engagement of all stakeholders in driving development. Civil society voiced that every right is balanced by a corresponding responsibility and held that a government’s authority is not a licence to rule, but a contract to serve. While governments play a vital role in providing leadership and serving as stewards in finalizing the new development agenda, civil society must identify how they will engage to make this vision a reality.

Forum deliberations showcased the kinds of roles and spaces that civil society fulfils in advancing development. Participants emphasised the opportunity to begin building institutions on a foundation of genuine democratic accountability, and the need to articulate a vision for the region and offer tangible policies and approaches that speak to peoples’ values.
They defined some of the key roles they play that should continue to be strengthened, in the shaping of policy priorities, as advocates for local context and needs, as implementing partners of development programmes, and as monitors of development progress. Priority was placed on the potential of harnessing social accountability for more equitable and sustainable management of natural resources and the environment through environmental rights and justice frameworks, and gender-responsive development policies.

Participants asked not only whether the Post-2015 Agenda can focus the region’s capabilities on meeting development goals, but also whether the future agenda can embed the ideals and reflect the priorities and visions of citizens. Ultimately, participants held that Arab states and the region as a whole are bound together because the interests of each individual are inextricably linked to the wellbeing of every other member of society, making sustained prosperity and social justice inseparable and mutually reinforcing. The success or failure of the MDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be determined by all stakeholders working together.

**Session Notes: Proceedings from the Arab Development Forum**

Over the course of the Arab Development Forum, six working group sessions were held, representing a cross-section of issues that are of vital importance to the region, and featured prominently in the Millennium Declaration. These sessions focused on current status and trends within each respective theme, and culminated with consideration of prospects for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

- **Working Group 1** > Poverty reduction, inclusive growth and employment generation
- **Working Group 2** > Conflict prevention and social cohesion
- **Working Group 3** > Voice, participation, citizen engagement and political inclusion
- **Working Group 4** > Access to and quality of basic services: Education
- **Working Group 5** > Access to and quality of basic services: Health
- **Working Group 6** > Environmental sustainability post Rio+20
Priorities for the Post-2015 Development Agenda in the Arab Countries

WORKING GROUP 1

Poverty reduction, inclusive growth and employment generation

The relevance of MDG1 continues to be very high in the region. The evolving Arab uprisings have exposed distorted development policies, social justice deficits and over three decades of generally poorly managed economic liberalization policies but more importantly of implementing economic reform packages that did not properly address the socio-economic conditions in most of the countries in the Arab world.

The result was a rising dissatisfaction of Arab citizens who were demanding better livelihoods including access to decent job opportunities. An underpinning factor since the year 2000 is the fact that while most countries in the region have experienced economic growth, inequality has been on the rise.

Therefore, the scope of MDG1 reveals interconnectedness with the issue of rights. While Arab Governments can claim some progress towards reducing poverty and hunger and increasing job opportunities, the evident frustration of Arab citizens reflects a failure to address inequality. Poverty and inequality arise principally because of inappropriate economic policy and legal frameworks as well as the denial of human rights. If poverty is to be alleviated then it is necessary to protect, promote and fulfil human rights while introducing and implementing an economic policy framework with inclusive growth in its core.

MDG1 remains high on the agenda and its scope can be expanded as the recent developments in the region have underlined that even prosperity without equity and freedom has proved destabilizing. Poor people are not just defined by their monetary poverty but also by being disenfranchised rights holders unable to exercise basic human rights to meet their aspirations for freedom, dignity and the right to adequate standards of living, including the right to food and decent work.

Participants noted the inadequacy of US$1.25 as a measurement of extreme poverty, and highlighted the need to search for a new development paradigm anchored in inclusive growth...
targets, integrating poverty reduction, employment generation with a focus on entrepreneurship, particularly for young women and men, and inequality.

The role of the state was widely debated, but consensus was not reached on the exact functions that should be played by the state, the private sector, and other actors. Suggestions were made by participants highlighting the need to revisit these roles, particularly in relation to trade and industry.

Delegates debated employment issues and voiced concerns on the character and quality of new jobs, the growth of the informal sector, and the need to address high population growth rates while establishing the conditions to harness potential demographic dividends that could arise as youth transition into the work force. Unemployment remains persistently high and no significant changes have been seen in the region over the last two decades. Concern was also voiced over wage stagnation in the face of inflation, and the need to alleviate insecurity concerns among workers.

There was a strong call for entrepreneurship and the need to create an entrepreneurship culture amongst youth starting with the education system.

Inequality and exclusion were also raised as serious concerns as benefits of economic growth continue to be uneven and there are very low levels of social protection across the region which have led to exclusion of women, youth, the disabled, and people living with HIV and AIDS.

Delegates stressed the linkages to good governance and highlighted the governance and accountability deficit in the region, suggesting that institutions are often weak and policy making opaque, limiting opportunities for participation in policy making.

**Messages for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

The over-arching message from this group is that poverty reduction and inclusive growth remain pressing priorities everywhere, especially for the poorest. The world has made remarkable progress in combating extreme poverty and efforts must continue and accelerate for the poorest people. The changing age structure of the population due to demographic transitions leading to decreasing dependency ratios is viewed as an opportunity that the region should not miss.

> The importance of a **human rights approach to development** where economic and political reforms are linked and where human rights and labour rights as well as issues of inequality and redistribution are addressed.

> Place **decent jobs at the centre of a new development agenda, with a special focus on young women and men**, and develop job-friendly coherent national economic
strategies. Identify specific employment targets and indicators adapted to the circumstances and needs of each country and encourage economic sectors most likely to provide high levels of decent employment.

> Expand a social protection floor for poverty reduction. Invest in social protection and move towards universal access to a basic set of guarantees of income security, health care, pensions and protections against all vulnerabilities.

> Drive inclusive development through governance reforms. Aim to build systems that respect human rights, democratic governance and rule of law. Identify indicators and targets to measure governance (such as transparency, accountability, delivery of public services, and citizen's participation in decision-making).

> Address inequalities, including gender inequality and exclusion of people with disabilities and HIV and AIDS. Target efforts to raise women's participation in the labour force as an untapped opportunity for growth and development. Ensure that indicators used to measure progress also look at the quality of life of men and women, and the personal freedoms they have. Ensure that needs of specific target groups are mainstreamed into social and economic policy.

> Integrate sub-national inequalities into goals and targets. Collect disaggregated data that captures groups such as rich and poor people, males and females, urban and rural areas, age cohorts, and ethnic groups. Improve sampling methods in surveys to better capture the disparities and inequalities as well as various aspects of poverty.

> Allow for regional or national flexibility in the setting of poverty targets. The US$1.25 cut-off is of minimal relevance to the Arab region – as will be any other single, fixed cut-off line. However poverty is still a major problem throughout the Arab region. Targets that more relevantly frame poverty-goals will help galvanize action that matters everywhere.

> Reap the benefits of demographic dividends in the Arab region. Changes in fertility and mortality patterns in the Arab region have resulted in a large cohort of people of working age (15-59), estimated at 224 million, compared to the population below 15 years of age (121 million) and 60 and above (71 million). Greater investments in job creation, health, education and skills development would increase the GDP per capita and boost economic growth. Similarly for countries that are lagging behind with high fertility and mortality, there is a need to invest significantly in reproductive health and maternal health and voluntary family planning to reduce maternal, infant and child mortality and fertility which would accelerate the demographic transition. Equally important is to develop policies to maximize the benefits of migration to both sending and receiving countries.
A number of countries in the Arab region are experiencing or recovering from conflicts that have destroyed social capital and impeded economic development. There is a need for increased attention to social cohesion through reducing inequalities and fostering sustainable development and growth. Combating poverty, inequalities and exclusion and strengthening systems of social accountability are found to be critical to fostering peaceful societies. Discrimination against women and girls - including gender-based violence, economic discrimination, reproductive health inequities, and harmful traditional practices - remains the most pervasive and persistent form of inequality.

Participants noted the importance of focusing on needs and priorities of the most vulnerable segments of population, particularly young people and women, the elderly, marginalized groups, and to empower them to be actively involved in responding to the needs of their peers in emergency settings as well as in longer-term peace-building efforts. The ongoing state of emergency in some countries and resulting insecurity severely hamper opportunities for people in affected communities, cause negative impacts on health, education, employment, family formation and civic engagement. Also highlighted was the need to strongly promote social integration by creating and strengthening institutions that improve social welfare and human security as well as foster an environment that advances rights and political, social and economic empowerment.

The group debated the concept of state security as a contradiction to individual security. Despite its broader understanding of the concept of security, the international community has not moved beyond state security to adopt any comprehensive approach to the concept of personal security. Participants highlighted that human security denotes individual freedom from basic insecurities, whatever the root of that insecurity. Individual security goes beyond and supplements state security.
Conflict and violence have major impacts on society, deepening social divisions

Conflicts in the Arab region are diverse in nature and origin and require different solutions. Support for peace in post-conflict societies clearly requires not only an understanding of the causes of conflict, but knowledge of what brings people and communities together. In short, all involved in supporting peace must develop an understanding of what builds social cohesion in a divided society.

Participants recognized the interdependence of population dynamics (dominated by changing age structure and the youth bulge) and development processes in the region. In this context there was a consensus that investing in young people is a pre-requisite for inclusive development in the region.

The impacts of conflict on social sectors such as health and education as well as on national resources were seen as among the greatest threats to the achievement of the MDGs and long-term sustainable development. Participants recognized the link between conflicts and the availability of natural resources. A new development framework should emphasize management and natural resources combined with major improvements in transparency and with combating of corruption at much broader levels.

The disruption of health services, either due to infrastructure damage or increased demands on health and social-service providers often leaves populations without access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health services and information. Loss of access to family planning services can lead to higher risk of maternal and child mortality. Identifying sexual and reproductive health and rights needs should be a routine part of any needs assessment, along with life-saving priority activities such as the Minimum Initial Service Package of Reproductive Health in Crises (MISP).

Whereas conflict resolution had been the purview of civil society work in the past (trainings, networks, local level activities), the Arab spring may have provided an opportunity for greater civil society-state engagement, especially on upstream policy level on conflict/crisis prevention and peace-building in a way that impacts national social cohesion.

Messages for the Post-2015 Development Agenda

> The new development framework should take a holistic approach and recognize the interconnectedness of development challenges. It should galvanize widespread support and international commitments, but also recognize that solutions to development challenges will differ based on national development and country-specific contexts.
> Policies should also aim to promote active ageing and provide opportunities for the elderly to contribute to their societies and communities while ensuring their social security and social safety nets.

> Promoting and implementing well-coordinated, survivor-centered prevention and response to gender-based violence is imperative.

> Conflicts differ and there is a need to **categorize types of conflicts** if they are to be included in the Post-2015 Agenda. These include religious, political, ethnic conflict or conflicts over natural resources, in particular where livelihoods can be imperilled by climate change and demographic growth.

> **Sectarian violence** is emerging in the context of some countries and should be addressed as part of the Post-2015 framework. Some participants felt that the Arab spring increased tensions among groups who had coexisted peacefully for many years prior to the Arab spring.

> The need to **focus on the roots of conflict** is important in the Post-2015 framework; however interventions on conflict prevention and peace-building would also need to address the symptoms and consequences of conflict as well. An early warning and response approach was also deemed important, as well as social justice which can help reinforce social cohesion and prevent conflict. Education as a means of conflict prevention and in particular the connection between education and job creation is essential to ensuring that the region's young people contribute constructively to social cohesion. Young people are seen as an untapped resource which need to be meaningfully and positively engaged in society.

> **Inclusion of women** and ensuring their full participation at all levels and in all stages of the decision-making processes in conflict resolution and peace building.

> There was no strong consensus on whether a separate goal on conflict is needed or whether investments in human development are sufficient using **existing measures** for civil society empowerment, and capacities for conflict prevention, mediation and resolution.

> Development in the Arab region depends on **investments in social cohesion, tolerance, and co-habitation** to better benefit from diversity in the region and prevent conflict. The need to exceed the limits of current consensus and to include access to justice and a new social contract in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

> More attention to providing basic health and education services in times of conflict for vulnerable groups especially children and women is needed.
WORKING GROUP 3

Voice, participation, citizen engagement and political inclusion

Governance issues have become increasingly salient in the Arab region over the course of the 21st century, as public discourse on reform began to advance in amount and intensity over the course of the first decade of the new Millennium in many countries, and as the wave of protest and change which began in Tunisia in December 2010 has ushered in a new era in which key governance concepts and questions are prominent in the overall regional debate.

Participants in this working group embraced a broad conceptualization of governance, spanning civil and political rights, public accountability and good governance, and efficiency and capability of public institutions in service delivery.

Participants recognized that the region’s governance dynamics are in flux, with some countries beginning what may be long transitions, others pursuing new types of reform, and still others experiencing new kinds and degrees of violent contestation. These dynamics have implications across the broad range of dimensions of governance considered.

In this context delegates voiced that new factors of state-fragility are emerging, with a regional picture showing a mix of failed states, fragile states and states which have been able to forestall fragility but which may still face challenges in the medium-term.

Participants also articulated a linkage between governance and values, noting that not all actors in the region demonstrate full adherence to the norms and values around governance as articulated in such frameworks as the UN Charter, International Covenants, and the Millennium Declaration.

In this respect, participants voiced their own commitment to such key values and principles as universal human rights, freedom of expression and assembly, separation of powers, public accountability, and equality and non-discrimination before the law, including during periods of political transition.
Political inclusion and meaningful participation in the decisions that shape the choices available to people were emphasized. Participants focused on the need for inclusion of women and girls, adolescents and youth, and refugees and internally displaced persons, a stakeholder group which is likely to increase in number in the near and perhaps medium terms, in particular due to the on-going crisis in Syria and political transitions throughout the Arab Region.

Gender equality and women’s political participation as citizens, and as decision and policy makers was strongly expressed by the participants in political transitions, conflict and post conflict situations.

Delegates emphasized the linkages between governance and other dimensions of development, positioning social accountability, access to information, good governance, gender equality, and institutional capabilities as key enablers of social justice and broad-based human development. This view of governance-and-development was echoed throughout other working group sessions, leading to a broad consensus that governance is pivotal in addressing such development challenges as reducing poverty, creating jobs, providing quality basic services, ensuring social cohesion, preventing and recovering from conflict, and achieving sustainable human development overall.

**Messages for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

The overarching message coming from this working group is that democratic, good and accountable governance, based on participation of women and men and young people in the decisions that shape their lives, is the best way to assure their rights and secure the broader freedom associated with inclusive, sustainable human development. Indeed, participants were clear in stating that they only expect sustainable human development to be achieved if the region improves its performance on governance.

Thus participants voiced clearly that a Post-2015 Agenda which effectively frames governance issues and challenges would be highly relevant and could help to galvanize action on reform in the Arab States region. Specific suggestions for reflecting governance in the future agenda include:

> Governance indicators have already been developed, and the task ahead may then be to adapt these to the region and to integrate in an acceptable manner into a goals framework. Participants suggested that the development community consider the partnership on governance indicators in Africa between the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. For a regionally owned experience, delegates
suggested that the architects of the future development agenda consider work done by the Arab Reform Initiative.

> Similarly, participants noted that international agreements and covenants – not least the Universal Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – already provide solid frameworks on which to base a robust reflection of governance issues in the future development framework.

> At the same time, it is vitally important for governance indicators to be fully relevant to regional and national contexts, and to capture quality and reality on the ground in order to avoid quantitative indicators that could be manipulated by governments. There may thus be a case for the development of national governance indicators informed by regional expertise within a global system that measures governance.

> Institution and context-sensitive governance indicators were strongly recommended. Specific targets and indicators are needed for governments, legislative bodies, political parties, and civil society organizations. Similarly, specific targets and indicators are needed for countries undertaking transition.

> Women are greatly under-represented in political institutions at all levels as a result of deep rooted discrimination common to societies across the region. The establishment of quotas for women has increased their presence in some national parliaments, but nonetheless women's influence, and their opportunity to hold leaders to account or to assume leadership positions themselves remains very low in most cases.
WORKING GROUP 4
Access to and quality of basic services: Education

With regard to achieving universal primary education, the Arab region has seen improvement in enrolment rates, transition rates from primary to secondary education, literacy rates of young adults aged 15-24 and gender parity in primary schooling. However these gains are constrained as the region on the whole has focused more on the “supply” side of education and less so on “demand” side incentives, public accountability and quality and relevance of education.

> A lack of qualified teachers remains a challenge to several Arab States in improving the quality of education.

> Geographical disparities exist in terms of access to primary education, a major problem in some countries. Further disparities remain within countries between rural and urban areas, as based on nationality, legal or social status.

> Gender related disparities exist with girls faring worse, in general, than boys in terms of access, and boys lagging behind in terms of school completion. In secondary education, girls’ access to the “science and technology” area of studies continues to be limited.

> Efforts to reach the marginalized – including children living with HIV and AIDS, orphans, children with disabilities, children from minority groups, children of migrant families, and those in areas of conflict have yielded mixed results.

In parallel, demographic momentum over the next decade is expected to increase pressure on public services in the region. Despite declines in fertility rates, the region will continue to have one of the highest percentages of youth in the world, where those aged 15-24 is expected to increase to 73 million in 2015. Ensuring appropriate strategies to address the
educational needs and rights of this group, especially girls, require that the perceived gap is closed between the educational qualifications of persons graduating, the availability of job opportunities and the employment needs of the market.

Conditions for education are exacerbated by increasing political tensions with conflict and occupation having had serious consequences on access and delivery of education in afflicted countries in the region.

**Messages for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

While the current Millennium Development Goal is limited to “Universal Primary Education”, education access in a broader sense remains an important priority in the Arab region, whether it is access to early childhood care and education, access to higher levels of education, access to educational provisions beyond the formal education system or equal access and quality of education for all children.

Equity and inclusion are crucial not only to give a chance to all children, but also to foster acceptance and ensure social stability that is inclusive of children of socio-economic backgrounds and other marginalized groups of children who tend to be taught by the least qualified teachers.

In addition educational quality in the region is still not on a par with the needs of the 21st century. Quality both in academic and non-academic areas should be actively promoted and enhanced and this includes education with respect to universal human values, citizenship, and human rights.

It is recommended to re-focus the approach to education on the following areas:

- **Access beyond primary education**, including Early Childhood Care and Education, higher levels of education, and education beyond the formal education system.

- **Equity and inclusion in education** of children with special education needs, children from marginalized areas or challenged socio-economic backgrounds, and females, along with children affected by conflict or natural disasters.

- **Quality of education provision** including education with respect to universal human values, citizenship, and human rights, as well as improvements for the status, recognition, qualifications and training of teachers.
In addition it is proposed that education indicators for the Post-2015 Agenda should consider:

> monitoring of education progress beyond primary or basic education – whether in early childhood care and education, secondary education or higher education.

> monitoring of educational quality in line with the paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive definition of quality, coupled with issues such as values.

> monitoring in terms of access and quality as essential and as a means towards achieving better education.

At the policy level, this implies the development and systematic application of indicators, specifically to ensure the existence of an accountability and improved governance system where civil society and media are empowered to play an active role.

The Post-2015 Agenda should be an opportunity to address the deficits in knowledge and move from solely-quantitative measures to an embrace of qualitative measures. Current efforts to improve education are focusing on quantitative and numeric goals while the challenge is to improve learning and knowledge, including reforming the educational systems and curricula, and promoting research and development skills and initiatives at different levels and in both the humanities and the sciences. It also should include concerted efforts to close the digital gap within and between countries and regions.
The Arab region has made substantial progress in achieving the health related MDGs and providing greater access to healthcare services. Life expectancy has increased by 23 years, infant and under-5 mortality rates have been halved, and routine immunization coverage and services has substantially expanded in the region. With the exception of LDCs, most Arab countries have successfully eliminated malaria, while tuberculosis continues to be a public health challenge.

Despite progress in a number of countries, the share of underweight children increased in the Arab LDCs, with more than one in three children affected, and progress on stunting has been marginal in the last decade, with some improvements in the Maghreb but with corresponding increases in the Mashreq and LDCs.

The Arab region has also been affected by the “nutrition transition,” with a double burden of under- and over-nutrition. This is compounded by obesity and malnutrition and their common linkages in poor diet and sedentary lifestyles.

Of further concern is the substantially differentiated progress in improving maternal health across countries. The region has one of the slowest rates of progress towards reducing maternal mortality – second to sub-Saharan Africa. The Arab region did not pay adequate attention to the target of universal access to reproductive health services. Hence, the region is home to more than 20 million married women with unmet needs for family planning and a high percentage of adolescent pregnancies. Few countries in the region will achieve the maternal health MDG. The high maternal mortality has grave health, social and economic consequences on the well-being of families, communities and nations.

Lack of epidemiological and behavioral data limits the understanding of HIV-related dynamics and trends. However, recent reports indicate the region is experiencing one of the fastest growing epidemics of HIV in the world, in particular segments of the populations including
sex workers, users of injectable drugs, and those engaged in same-sex practices. Moreover, the region has the lowest treatment coverage and shows limited political will to reduce stigma and discrimination and expand services to key populations where the epidemic is concentrated.

Health systems within the region face challenges against the backdrop of bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited technical capacities and inadequate funding. This is exacerbated by the cumulative impacts arising from chronic poverty, gender inequality and long term acute emergencies and conflicts. This is compounded by a lack of sufficient monitoring mechanisms, good health statistics and rigorous data collection and dissemination mechanisms. The region collectively would benefit from the harmonization of data, information and methodologies at national and regional levels.

In addition, while aggregate indicators are positive, the resolution of the noticeable disparities among different Arab states is a continuing challenge as health is by no means assured for all citizens in Arab countries, with women suffering the most from neglect and gender-biased traditions and harmful practices. These disparities are also evident by typology within countries, for example between rural and urban dwellers.

Participants reflected on the changing roles and responsibilities of civil society and the private sector in the delivery of health services as partners with governments that can act as alternate access points for the elderly, women and youth. They noted the need for laws and regulations to empower civil society to be community advocates and serve as interlocutors with governments as a voice for people to influence policies and ensure transparency and accountability while also raising awareness and educating the public on health concerns.

**Messages for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**
The essential ingredients for the integration of health in the Post-2015 Development Agenda as a reflection of the Arab context include:

**The continued relevance of the MDGs**
All the MDGs have multi-fold links and mutual impacts on one another. In the Arab region the **health- and nutrition-related MDGs are unfinished business** and reflect a development agenda that must be completed and integrated with the positive dividends of reducing poverty, improving nutritional status, universal commitment to basic human rights, and reducing gender inequalities. Special focus is needed for addressing nutritional issues (both under- and over-nutrition) maternal and neonatal mortality, and family planning. Research
shows that every dollar invested in family planning saves up to US$4 in health expenditure and US$31 in other social services, such as education and housing.

Of particular note access to clean water is of critical importance to this region in which about half of the region's population in the LDCs has no access to safe sanitation.

**Principles**
A new framework for health must be founded on core principles of equity, accountability, and sustainability to address the stark disparities in health across the region and within individual countries and to ensure the equitable distribution of health services to the population.

Any approach to addressing health issues must consider health as a fundamental human right and not only a development issue.

There is a need to foster accessibility to quality health services and to meet the needs of vulnerable groups (with special attention to the poor, rural populations, the elderly, women, youth, migrants, IDPs and refugees). It is recommended that one of the key mechanisms is the establishment of a Social Protection Floor that provides access to essential social services and social transfers, at country level with an aim for universal access to health care.

**Approaches**
The Post-2015 Agenda should integrate health into development issues, leading to health policies as well as policies for health that consider the social determinants of health including gender equity, girls education, access to services and infrastructure.

It should also account for emerging trends and threats that adversely affect populations including the increased prevalence of non-communicable diseases, HIV, disabilities, obesity and road traffic accidents, demographic challenges and the demand based needs of different age cohorts, and the impacts of conflict and natural disasters that increase the vulnerability of segments of the population.

A new framework must emphasize health promotion, population-based preventive measures and enhanced civil society partnerships as cost-effective approaches for community-based implementation.

A future goal framework should learn from the experience of the MDGs and put more emphasis on the quality of health services rather than a sole focus on quantitative progress.
The Arab region faces pressing environmental challenges that may have a profound influence on the region’s future development prospects and could well reverse development gains by mid-century unless urgent actions are taken. The session highlighted food, water and energy insecurity trends and risks in the Arab region, and the strong connections of environmental change to other MDGs such as poverty, education, health and gender. The impacts of land degradation were highlighted, along with the challenges of climate change. Further attention was given to emerging concerns such as expanded slum areas in neighbourhoods of large cities as well as the region’s ability to sustain development goals and ensure food security beyond 2015.

Participants in this consultation embraced a wide conception of environmental sustainability, affirming that environmental sustainability is not secondary to development but rather that sustainable food, water and energy use and a stable climate are primary requirements and drivers of overall sustainability and human progress. In this respect participants welcomed the momentum building around the world, as reflected in the Rio+20 Outcome Document and the emerging Sustainable Development Goals, for a robust understanding of the need to integrate environmental sustainability in a multi-dimensional context, linked with economic and social sustainability and as well as with human rights and the march towards social justice, accountability and local and global partnership.

However participants noted that in the Arab region, regional and national policy dialogues and frameworks around environmental sustainability are far from these ideals. Indeed, participants noted that environmental concerns remain “relegated” as a concern “only for environmentalists,” an assertion revealed in relatively weak environment ministries; a lack of integration of environment concerns across sector policies and programmes; low levels of public awareness of long-term environmental issues; and a lack of full-cost accounting approaches which bring considerations of natural capital, ecosystem services, ecological footprint and planetary boundaries to bear on policy decisions.
Population dynamics have also posed challenges. Arab countries scored among the highest population growth rates in the world, and are experiencing rapid urbanization, putting tremendous strains on resources such as food, energy, water and basic services such as sanitation.

In this context the region has struggled to make progress on environmental sustainability. While some advances have been noted in relation to MDG7 targets on ozone depleting substances and protected areas, much lesser progress has been made with respect to food and water security, sustainable energy, or water supply and sanitation. Progress is particularly lacking in the region's LDCs and rural areas.

Given the region’s economic and employment challenges, linkages between green economy, economic revitalization and job creation came to the fore. It was highlighted that the shift to clean technology and more efficient, production systems may bring new economic and employment opportunities, with many countries in the region for example now issuing clean energy policies and targets.

The sustainability of food, energy, water and general environmental assets was posited as core to social justice and accountability in the region, and participants noted that the current wave of transformational change in the region can only be complete if sustainable development is integrated into the governance and rights-based reforms expected to take shape in coming years across the region. This includes equal accessibility to natural resources between men and women and factoring how environmental impacts such as climate change affects groups in different forms and intensities.

The critical role of advancing sustainability through improved education was also emphasized, as was the recognition of the value of traditional knowledge in preserving ecosystems, coping with environmental challenges and building and sharing solutions.

Participants also emphasized the shared responsibilities of addressing environmental sustainability and mitigating and adapting to climate change, noting in particular that industrialized countries have borne the responsibility for most environmental depletion and contributions to climate change, and that the primary responsibility of the wealthiest countries to help mitigate the crisis remains a paramount concern from the global perspective.

**Messages for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

The overarching message coming from this working group is that environmental sustainability, which aims at a balance between natural resources and population dynamics, needs to be fully integrated and at the core of the post-2015 agenda and the region's
future development policies. Participants voiced that the perceived “compartmentalization” or “silo” approach to environmental sustainability reflected in the MDG framework and Arab countries’ policies has been a key bottleneck in MDG achievement. Issues of food, energy and water security will be critical to the Post-2015 Agenda and the transformational vision for a new model of development arising in many countries in the region. This offers an opportunity to frame issues of resource governance and environmental sustainability much more broadly, thereby raising the perceived importance of sustainable development as an integral factor for addressing goals of poverty reduction, health, and education.

> Participants also made clear that environmental sustainability and the sustainable and equitable use of resources is interlinked with good governance including natural resource governance, ensuring multi-stakeholder participation, and including women and men as agents of change and decision makers at all levels.

> Environmental rights and justice must become a key component of social justice.

> Environmental sustainability is by definition a matter of global concern requiring action by all countries, and participants voiced the need for a truly universal framework outlining the roles and responsibilities of all countries. This universal approach would need to be undergirded in the future framework by making a much clearer linkage between the Global Partnership for Development and progress towards other goals including environmental sustainability and resource security, including issues such as clean technology transfer and development, and South-South cooperation.