



NEW YORK CITY, NY, USA
18 - 22 March (Conf. A) / 25 - 29 March (Conf. B)



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA BACKGROUND GUIDE 2018

Written by: Jakob Landwehr, Director; Daniel Sweeney, Director;
Shaun Martinez, Administrative Assistant; Mary Lynne Moeller, Administrative Assistant



NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

THE WORLD'S LARGEST UNIVERSITY-LEVEL SIMULATION • SINCE 1927

2945 44th Avenue South • Minneapolis, MN 55406

www.nmun.org • info@nmun.org • 612.353.5649



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2018 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to welcome you to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). This year's staff are: Directors Daniel Sweeney (Conference A) and Jakob Landwehr (Conference B). Danny holds a B.S. in Political Science and is pursuing his M.A. in International Development with a focus on Latin America and Gender. This will be his fourth year on staff. Jakob holds a B.A in European Studies and M.A in International Conflict Analysis. He is currently pursuing his PhD in the field of humanitarian military interventions and works in the field of mediation and negotiation with a focus on the United Nations (UN). This will be his third year on staff.

The topics under discussion for Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia are:

1. Achieving the Arab Development Outlook
2. Strengthening Arab Least Developed Countries
3. Reducing the Occurrence of Gender-Based Violence

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia is a regional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which provides a Middle Eastern and Northern African perspective on issues facing regional development. As a regional commission, ESCWA may foster regional cooperation amongst Member States, civil society, and non-governmental organizations; address issues to regional economic and social development; and make recommendations to ECOSOC for future actions for the ESCWA region. When addressing economic and social issues, ESCWA's mandate promotes solutions that include sustainable development.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a [Position Paper](#) by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2018 in accordance with the guidelines in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

Two resources, to download from the [NMUN website](#), that serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions are the:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Alexander Rudolph (Conference A) and Samantha Winn (Conference B), at usg.ecosoc@nmun.org

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Conference A

Daniel Sweeney, Director

Conference B

Jakob Landwehr, Director



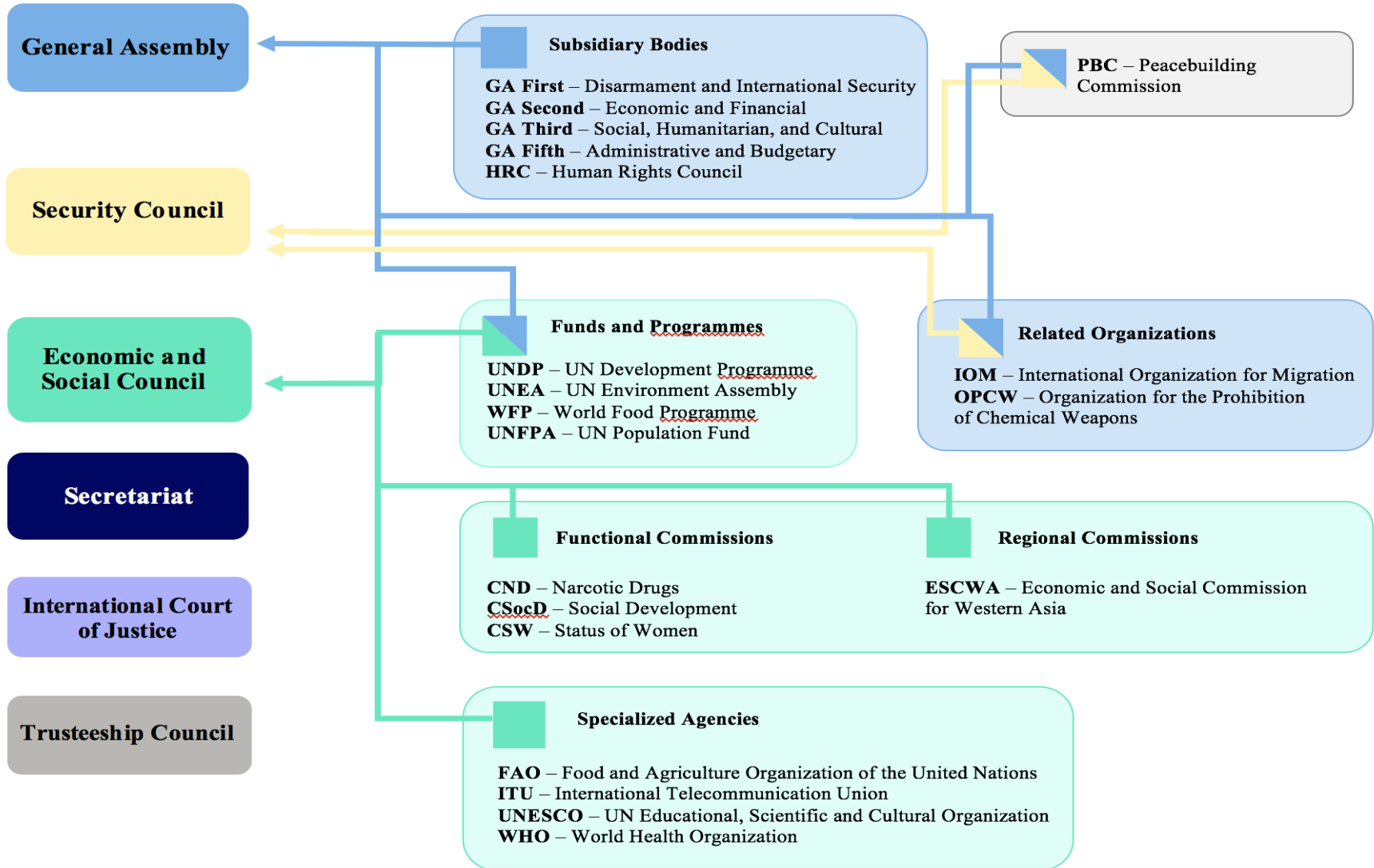
Table of Contents

United Nations System at NMUN•NY.....	2
Abbreviations.....	3
Committee Overview.....	5
Introduction.....	5
Governance, Structure, and Membership.....	5
Mandate, Functions, and Powers.....	6
Recent Sessions and Current Priorities.....	7
Conclusion.....	8
Annotated Bibliography.....	9
Bibliography.....	10
I. Achieving the Arab Development Outlook.....	13
Introduction.....	13
International and Regional Framework.....	13
Role of the International System.....	15
The Five pillars of Vision 2030.....	16
Successes.....	17
Opportunities and Challenges.....	18
Conclusion.....	19
Further Research.....	19
Annotated Bibliography.....	19
Bibliography.....	21
II. Strengthening Arab Least Developed Countries.....	24
Introduction.....	24
International and Regional Framework.....	24
Role of the International System.....	26
Economic development of LDCs.....	27
Financing LDCs.....	29
Peace and stability for LDCs.....	30
Conclusion.....	31
Further Research.....	32
Annotated Bibliography.....	32
Bibliography.....	34
III. Reducing the Occurrence of Gender Based Violence.....	41
Introduction.....	41
International and Regional Framework.....	42
Role of the International System.....	44
Lack of Reporting on GBV.....	45
Education and GBV in Schools.....	46
Conclusion.....	47
Further Research.....	47
Annotated Bibliography.....	48
Bibliography.....	50



United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Abbreviations

AAAA	<i>Addis Ababa Action Agenda</i>
ACCESS	Arab Citizens Common Economic Security Space
ACU	Arab Customs Union
ADP	Arab Development Portal
ANND	Arab NGO Network for Development
CDP	UN Committee for Development Policy
CEDAW	<i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</i>
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECRI	Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division
ECW	ESCWA Centre for Women
ECWA	Economic Commission for Western Asia
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GAFTA	Greater Arab Free Trade Area
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNI	Gross national income
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPoA	<i>Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action</i>
ITC	International Trade Centre
LAS	League of Arab States
LDC	Least developed country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDRI	Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPA	National Adaptation Program of Action
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NTP	National Transformation Program
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFID	OPEC Fund for International Development
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAFTA	Pan-Arab Free Trade Area
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRGBV	School-related GBV
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UDHR	<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i>
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNESOB	United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut



UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-OHRLLS	United Nations High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
WHO	World Health Organization

Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) regional commissions were formed to fulfill the economic and social goals set forth in the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) by promoting inter-regional cooperation and integration between Member States.¹ The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was the fifth regional commission created to act under the auspices of ECOSOC.² It was formed to represent the interests of countries formerly covered by the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut (UNESOB) in Lebanon.³ ESCWA was originally established as the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), pursuant to ECOSOC resolution 1818 (LV) on 9 August 1973.⁴ The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General at that time, Dr. Kurt Waldheim, inaugurated the first session on 3 June 1974.⁵ On 24 April 1985, ECWA adopted resolution 133 (XII), “recognizing the extreme importance of social development in the context of the overall development of the economies of the members of the Economic Commission for Western Asia.”⁶ Subsequently, on 26 July 1985, ECOSOC resolution 69/1985 re-designated ESCWA as the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and entrusted it with additional social development responsibilities moving forward.⁷

The **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia** (ESCWA) is a regional commission, reporting to the Economic and Social Council.

ESCWA’s current priorities include natural resource management, technology for development, gender and women’s issues, social development, mechanisms for monitoring development progress, economic development and regional integration, peacebuilding, and good governance.⁸ ESCWA also collects data on the effects of war and occupation in the Arab region, specifically in relation to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.⁹ Changes to population demographics remain a consistent area of focus for ESCWA; the Commission recently noted in April 2017 that over the past four decades mortality has decreased and net life expectancy has increased.¹⁰ This has resulted new opportunities and challenges for Member States to develop sustainable practices for the management and distribution of resources.¹¹ In the coming years, ESCWA aims to strengthen relationships among its Member States and contribute to a greater understanding of the role the region can play in addressing socio-economic issues facing conflict-stricken Member States.¹²

Governance, Structure, and Membership

The Executive Secretary is appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General; while there are no defined limitation to years of service, previous Executive Secretaries have held terms between two and eleven years.¹³ The current Executive Secretary is Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim of Iraq, appointed in 2017.¹⁴ ESCWA also has an Advisory

¹ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Chapter IV, Article 13.

² UN ESCWA, *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, 2016.

³ UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)*, 1973.

⁴ *Ibid.*, UN ESCWA, *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, 2016.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ UN ESCWA, *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, 2016, p.1.

⁷ UN ECOSOC, *Amendment of the Terms of Reference of the Economic Commission for Western Asia: Change of Name of the Commission (1985/69)*, 1985.

⁸ UN ESCWA, *Natural Resources*, 2017.

⁹ UN ESCWA, *Statement by Rouba Arja on behalf of the ESCWA Population and Social Development section on the challenges presented by changing demographics at the Commission on Population and Development’s Fiftieth Session*, 2017.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ UN ESCWA, *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, 2016, p. 10.

¹⁴ UN ESCWA, *Executive Secretary*, 2017.

Committee comprised of heads of diplomatic missions of ESCWA Member States.¹⁵ The Advisory Committee was established under ECOSOC resolution 175 (XV) of 18 May 1989 on “Strengthening of the Role and Performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia” following the recommendation of the UN Joint Inspection Unit.¹⁶ The goal of the Advisory Committee is to improve regional cooperation and further promote ESCWA’s work.¹⁷

ECOSOC resolution 1818 (LV) of 9 August 1973 on “Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia” empowered ESCWA to establish subsidiary bodies after discussion with relevant actors, such as ECOSOC and any specialized agencies.¹⁸ To this end, ESCWA has established 10 specialized subsidiary committees with varying compartmentalized fields of focus: Committee on Energy, Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization, Committee on Social Development, Committee on Water Resources, Committee on Transport and Logistics, Committee on Technology for Development, and Committee on Women, as well as the Executive, Technical, and Statistical Committees.¹⁹ Each committee is comprised of relevant experts based on thematic areas of work of each committee and the meetings are held biennially.²⁰

ESCWA consists of 18 Member States who are disparate in geographical size, population, and wealth.²¹ ESCWA’s membership was initially limited to countries served by UNESOB, but now reflects a comprehensive approach toward socio-economic demographics and challenges in the Arab region.²² In its 27th annual session, the Commission called for its name to be changed to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Arab Region; while the preliminary proposal was met with substantial support of the Member States, it has not shown further progress.²³ Membership requests are decided by ECOSOC upon the Commission’s recommendation.²⁴

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

ECOSOC resolution 1818 (LV) mandated ESCWA to coordinate regional cooperation to improve economic conditions and international economic competitiveness of Member States in the Arab region, a mandate which was later modified to include the significant social component.²⁵ ESCWA performs this function by investigating economic and technological problems and developments concerning the region through a variety of subcommittees.²⁶ The Commission is responsible for collecting, evaluating, and disseminating data and information to Member States on actionable opportunities and challenges through studies on subjects such as resource scarcity and the impact of conflict on sustainable development; additionally, ESCWA cooperates with other regional commissions to develop effective regional and inter-regional practices and programs.²⁷ ESCWA uses this data to provide advisory services and technical assistance to its Member States.²⁸ Member States drive both policy-making and norm-setting in ESCWA, while simultaneously benefiting from its policies, programs, and additional assistance through ESCWA-sponsored workshops and training events.²⁹ ESCWA also serves as a forum for academics, technical experts, and high-level Member State officials via its thematic and periodic meetings.³⁰

¹⁵ UN ECOSOC, UN ESCWA, *Strengthening of the Role and Performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (175 XV)*, 1989.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)*, 1973.

¹⁹ UN ESCWA, *ESCWA Committees*, 2017.

²⁰ UN ECOSOC, *The Establishment within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia of A Committee for Women (240 XXII)*, 2003.

²¹ UN ESCWA, *About ESCWA*, 2017; Jolly & Emmerij, *UN Regional Contributions: Western Asia*, 2010, p. 2.

²² UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)*, 1973.

²³ UN ESCWA, *Report On the 27th Session (E/ESCWA/27/9)*, 2012, p. 4.

²⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)*, 1973.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, UN ECOSOC, *Amendment of the Terms of Reference of the Economic Commission for Western Asia: Change of Name of the Commission (1985/69)*, 1985.

²⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)*, 1973.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Strengthening of the Role and Performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (175 XV)*, 1989.

³⁰ Jolly & Emmerij, *UN Regional Contributions: Western Asia*, 2010, p. 1.

ESCWA operates within the framework of the UN system under the supervision of ECOSOC.³¹ As such, it provides annual reports of its activities and recommends resolutions.³² Resolutions adopted by ESCWA affirm the collective position of its members, underline their individual commitments, and assign the ESCWA Secretariat various responsibilities and functions.³³ For example, in ESCWA resolution 292 (XXVI) of 19 May 2010 on “Upgrading the Section for Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues To the Level of A Division and Establishing A Governmental Committee On Emerging Issues and Development In Conflict Settings,” the commission calls upon Member States to pursue peacebuilding through regional development and reconstruction efforts.³⁴ Finally, it asks the secretariat to provide the necessary financial and human resources support for ESCWA.³⁵ As ESCWA meets biennially, it informs ECOSOC about Member States’ views on the key issues faced by the region.³⁶ ECOSOC’s regional commissions are encouraged to set their own priorities and cooperate with other UN agencies in the region on common issues.³⁷ They are encouraged to share best practices, achievements, and experiences.³⁸ For that reason, ESCWA’s Executive Secretary is a member of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and a member of the UN Development Group.³⁹

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

In 2015, ESCWA published the *2030 Arab Development Outlook*, which reflected upon the significant degree of conflict and unrest in the Arab region that is both a catalyst and a symptom of development challenges.⁴⁰ The report’s development projections operated under the assumption of lasting and resilient peace and stability, and to create that foundation, it noted five major challenges facing the region.⁴¹ These challenges are ending conflict and occupation in the region, reforming public institutions and system of governance, diversifying economic growth sources to generate widespread and decent employment, meeting social justice and human development demands in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on health and education, and ending the destruction of Arab cultural heritage.⁴²

ESCWA made amendments to the program of work for the 2016-2017 biennium in the form of 10 reformulated topics and 43 additional topics on varying issues including integrated resource management, conflict mitigation, and information and communication technology for regional integration.⁴³ ESCWA plans to focus on advancing sustainable development throughout national and regional levels by supporting efforts to develop efficient methods of natural resource usage, promoting green energy technology development, and assisting in regional cooperation to ensure food, water, and energy security to alleviate rural poverty.⁴⁴ ESCWA seeks to place social justice at the core of its development efforts in the Arab region, and promotes efforts to address social inequalities through integration of socially-inclusive development priorities in policy-making at the national and regional levels.⁴⁵ The proposed ESCWA strategic framework for the 2018-2019 biennium, seeking to promote cooperative regional effort toward the 2030 Agenda, aims to integrate the SDGs into the economic structures and policy-making agendas of Member States, as well as ensuring comprehensive compatibility of policy and enhancing Member States statistical capacity.⁴⁶

³¹ UN ECOSOC, *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)*, 1973.

³² Ibid.

³³ UN ESCWA, *Upgrading the Section for Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues To the Level of A Division and Establishing A Governmental Committee On Emerging Issues and Development In Conflict Settings (292 XXVI)*, 2010.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *United Nations Handbook 2016-17*, 2017, p. 179.

³⁷ UN ECOSOC, *Further Measures for the Restructuring & Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social & Related Fields (1998/46)*, 1998.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2015, p. 17.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴² Ibid., p. 3.

⁴³ UN ESCWA, *Proposed amendments to the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 (E/ESCWA/29/5(Part II))*, 2016.

⁴⁴ UN ESCWA, *Revised draft strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019 (E/ESCWA/29/6)*, 2016, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-5.

The 29th Ministerial Session convened from 13 to 15 December 2016 in Doha, Qatar.⁴⁷ The session included three Ministerial panels with dedicated topics of discussion.⁴⁸ The first panel was tasked with launching a dialogue on challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.⁴⁹ The panel noted three challenges to implementation, including economic, security, and policy factors of the global environment that affect the Arab region, as well as inhibiting factors within the Arab region, and various compatibility challenges inherent to implementation of the 2030 Agenda.⁵⁰ The second panel served as a dialogue between policymakers and experts on the short and long-term impacts that conflict has had on the implementation of the SDGs in the Arab region.⁵¹ The third panel’s objective was to promote the policy, research, and capacity-building tools provided by ESCWA to assist Member States in implementing development priorities on course with the 2030 Agenda.⁵²

Published in early 2017, ESCWA’s *Annual Report 2016* served as a benchmark on Arab development.⁵³ The report noted three areas of focus that are expected to have substantial impact on future development success.⁵⁴ The section on “Inclusive Development” outlined social justice strategies to reduce poverty and inequalities, knowledge economy and employment strategies to create competitive economies that enable youth employment, and additional focus on supporting sustainable natural resources to address natural resource inequality in the Arab region.⁵⁵ The “Regional Integration” section emphasized policy coherence at the international and regional levels on topics such as food, water, and energy security and equality of access issues, women’s inclusion in policy-making and planning, and climate change, as well as discussed strategies for economic development.⁵⁶ Finally, the discussion on “Good Governance and Resilience” addressed strategies strengthening government and civil institutions, engaging with citizen in policy-making, and enhancing the resilience of civil infrastructure to conflict and disaster.⁵⁷

From 8 to 10 August 2017, ESCWA held a “Workshop on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on SDG’s, and its Alignment with National Development Plans,” which served to inform participants on international frameworks for the advancement of women, and to develop sustainable development targets and indicators in nationally-driven plans.⁵⁸ ESCWA also conducted a workshop on Technical Assistance between 14-17 August 2017, with discussion focused toward the development of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security for the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and had another Technical Assistance workshop on Women’s Affairs in Lebanon between 19-20 September 2017 with currently unpublished reports and several more workshops throughout the year, further demonstrating the Member State-driven work of the committee.⁵⁹

Conclusion

ESCWA has continued its mandate of fostering regional economic and social development with a renewed focus on addressing the challenges of conflict in the Arab region, made evident by Executive Secretary Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim in his speech at the 2017 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on 10 July, 2017, in which the Executive Secretary reiterated ESCWA’s dedication to sustainable development in the Arab region.⁶⁰ Though the region is faced with many challenges, whether naturally-occurring or human-made, ESCWA remains

⁴⁷ UN ESCWA, *Report of the 29th Session (E/ESCWA/29/12/Report)*, 2016, p. 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7, 16.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵² UN ESCWA, *Report of the 29th Session (E/ESCWA/29/12/Report)*, 2016, p. 18.

⁵³ UN ESCWA, *Annual Report 2016*, 2017.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-44.

⁵⁸ UN ESCWA, *Workshop on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on SDG’s, and its Alignment with National Development Plans*, 2017.

⁵⁹ UN ESCWA, *Technical Assistance towards the development of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for UAE*, 2017; UN ESCWA, *Technical assistance to the Ministry of State for Women Affairs in Lebanon, on the implementation of SDG’s and Agenda 2030*, 2017.

⁶⁰ UN ESCWA, *Statement by Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim at Session Two of the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on 10 July 2017 in New York*, 2017.

optimistic and committed to ensuring its Member States are effectively equipped to make policy that is compatible with the 2030 Agenda.⁶¹ Conflict continues to present barriers to sustainable development in many parts of the Arab region, and ESCWA recognizes the foundational need for peace and security for implementation to be effective.⁶² It has focused its most recent efforts into identifying the effects of conflict on sustainable development, identifying sustainable solutions to the Arab region's emerging resource scarcity issues including energy and water access, and emphasizing inclusion and social justice in policy-making as key contributing factors to lasting stability and sustainable development.⁶³

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (1973). *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 27 July 2017 from: [https://undocs.org/E/RES/1818\(LV\)](https://undocs.org/E/RES/1818(LV))

The last in a line of regional commissions created under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, the Economic Commission for Western Asia was established on 9 August 1973. This source outlines the mandate and objectives of the Commission, and as a founding document, captures the spirit in which the commission was created. This provides delegates with both a legal guide to the Commission, and a constant reminder of its mandate.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Report of the 29th Session (E/ESCWA/29/12/Report)*. Retrieved 19 August 2017 from:

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/reports/e_escwa_29_12_report_e.pdf

ESCWA conducts biannual high-level ministerial meetings that showcase the periodical achievements of the body as well as evaluates ESCWA's activities and the strategy for the next two years. In addition to being the most recent complete picture of ESCWA activities, it provides a quality source for several things the evaluation mechanism for ESCWA activities, and the inner workings of the commission among others. This will assist delegates in tracing the different inputs that form ESCWA's official discussions.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from:

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/escwa_tor_eng1600234.pdf

This source provides the essential background information regarding the organization of ESCWA, its mandate, functions and powers, and last but not, least, its rules of procedure. This is probably the most essential source pertaining to delegates regarding introduction to ESCWA's working methods. This should be the starting point for delegates' research as this document contains the key information on the main operating procedures of the Commission.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development from Vision to Action*. Retrieved 18 August 2017 from:

<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/annual-report-2016-english.pdf>

The 2016 Annual Report serves as the most current publication that details the entirety of the 2016 development year for ESCWA. The report contains specific information in regards to ESCWA ongoing priorities, and also provides informative graphics and statistics on the allocation of annual funds broken down into development sector, as well as gender-based data on participation levels of the ESCWA-sponsored workshops and training events. This report is a must-have for delegates to assist in noting the progress and focus of ESCWA at the end of 2016, as well as lays out the strategic framework that addresses challenges in regional integration, inclusive development, and good governance and resilience.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030* [Report]. Retrieved 10 August 2017 from:

⁶¹ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2015.

⁶² UN ESCWA, *Report of the 29th Session (E/ESCWA/29/12/Report)*, 2016.

⁶³ UN ESCWA, *Annual Report 2016*, 2017.

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/arab-development-outlook-vision-2030-english_0.pdf

This report surveys ESCWA's expectations and challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda. It is critical information for delegates to guide their work to effectively meet ESCWA's future objectives in both their position paper writing and conference sessions. The report highlights challenges and recommendations for topics regarding Peace and Security, Human Development and Social Justice, Regional Integration, Governance, and Transformational Growth. This resource is essential for delegates to determine where their Member State fits into the greater 2030 Agenda.

Bibliography

Charter of the United Nations. (1945). Retrieved 11 October 2017 from:

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>

Jolly, R. & L. Emmerij. (2010). *UN Regional Contributions: Western Asia*. Retrieved 15 August 2017 from:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20170304210505/http://www.unhistory.org/briefing/22WestAsia.pdf>

New Zealand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2017). *United Nations Handbook 2016-17*. Retrieved 26 August 2017 from: https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Handbooks/United_Nations_Handbook-2016-2017.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (1973). *Establishment of an Economic Commission for Western Asia (1818 LV)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 11 October 2017 from: [https://undocs.org/E/RES/1818\(LV\)](https://undocs.org/E/RES/1818(LV))

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (1985). *Amendment of the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Western Asia: Change of Name of the Commission (1985/69)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 11 October 2017 from: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/ECOSOCRes/1985-69.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (1998). *Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (1998/46)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 11 October 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/res/1998/eres1998-46.htm>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (1989). *Strengthening of the Role and Performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (175 XV)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 25 September 2017 from:

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/resolutions/175_xv.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2003). *The Establishment within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia of a Committee for Women (240 XXII)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 11 October 2017 from: [http://css.escwa.org.lb/english/240%20\(XXII\).pdf](http://css.escwa.org.lb/english/240%20(XXII).pdf)

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2010). *Upgrading The Section For Emerging And Conflict-Related Issues To The Level Of A Division And Establishing A Governmental Committee On Emerging Issues And Development In Conflict Settings 292 (XXVI)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 11 October 2017 from:

<http://css.escwa.org.lb/english/292XXVI.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2012). *Report on the 27th Session (E/ESCWA/27/9)*. Retrieved 11 October 2017 from:

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/reports/27_9_report_e.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2015). *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030* [Report]. Retrieved 10 August 2017 from:

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/arab-development-outlook-vision-2030-english_0.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Proposed amendments to the program of work for the biennium 2016-2017 (E/ESCWA/29/5(Part II))*. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/proposed_amendments_to_the_programme_of_work_2016-2017.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Report of the 29th Session (E/ESCWA/29/12/Report)*. Retrieved 19 August 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/reports/e_escwa_29_12_report_e.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Revised draft strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019 (E/ESCWA/29/6)*. Retrieved 22 August 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/7-revised_draft_strategic_framework_for_the_biennium_2018-2019.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (E/ESCWA/2016/TOR)*. Retrieved 28 September 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/escwa_tor_eng1600234.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *About ESCWA* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/about-escwa>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development from Vision to Action*. Retrieved 18 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/annual-report-2016-english.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *ESCWA Committees* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/about-escwa/governing-and-advisory-bodies/escwa-committees>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Executive Secretary* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/about-escwa/executive-secretary>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Natural Resources* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/natural-resources>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017, July 17). *Statement by Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim at Session Two of the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on 10 July 2017 in New York*. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/oes-speeches/2017-high-level-political-forum-sustainable-development>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017, April 3-7). *Statement by Rouba Arja on behalf of the ESCWA Population and Social Development section on the challenges presented by changing demographics at the Commission on Population and Development's Fiftieth Session*. Retrieved on 26 September 2017 from: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/pdf/commission/2017/system/AgendaItem3/escwa_en.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Technical assistance to the Ministry of State for Women Affairs in Lebanon, on the implementation of SDG's and Agenda 2030* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/technical-assistance-ministry-state-women-affairs-lebanon-implementation-sdgs-and-agenda-2030>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Technical Assistance towards the development of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for UAE* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/technical-assistance-towards-development-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security-uae>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Workshop on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on SDG's, and its Alignment with National Development Plans* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/workshop-implementation-2030-agenda-sdg%E2%80%99s-and-its-alignment-national-development-plans>

I. Achieving the Arab Development Outlook

Introduction

The *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030* (2016) was created by the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) as a regional plan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁶⁴ Vision 2030 capitalizes on the ability of individual Member States to define how they will implement the SDGs.⁶⁵ It is key for supporting social and economic development in ESCWA Member States as it establishes the region's strategy toward implementing the SDGs, creates a timeline, and outlines best practices.⁶⁶ Growth rates in the Human Development Index (HDI) of Arab states have dropped by more than half in the last five years.⁶⁷ The number of active conflicts in the region rose from four to 11 between 2000-2015, slowing development.⁶⁸ A rapidly expanding labor force will require the Arab region to create 60 million more jobs by 2020, and current economic indicators say it may not be able to do so.⁶⁹ A failure in this aspect would contribute to radicalization among youth and a continued cycle of conflict.⁷⁰ Vision 2030 is a road map to circumventing these barriers and achieving the SDGs.⁷¹

The Vision 2030 document breaks down its development focuses into five key areas: Peace and Security, Governance, Transformational Growth, Human Development and Social Justice, and Regional Integration.⁷² Further, Vision 2030 outlines a number of specific goals to measure the success of these five pillars, including increasing the HDI of Arab states.⁷³ Recognizing the disruptive role of conflict in the region, and the relationship between unemployment and conflict, Vision 2030 specifically names peace and security as the cornerstone of its transformational growth scenario.⁷⁴ This document comes at a time when a legacy of failed national and regional economic policies, pressure on natural resources, and conflict, come together to present a unique set of challenges to development in the Arab region.⁷⁵

International and Regional Framework

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), the document that originated the SDGs, specifically notes the importance of regional bodies in ensuring concrete actions at the regional level to achieve the SDGs.⁷⁶ The SDGs encompass improvements in economic growth, quality education, and good health, all of which can be broadly gauged by an increase in HDI.⁷⁷ The Outlook's first key areas of Peace and Security and Good Governance are closely related to SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.⁷⁸ Further, Transformational Growth directly addresses SDGs 6 to 12 on Water, Clean Energy, Economic Growth, Infrastructure, Sustainable Cities, and Responsible Consumption.⁷⁹ SDGs 1 through 5 on Poverty, Hunger, Health, Education, and Gender Equality, respectively, and SDG 10 on Inequality are in tune with Vision 2030's objectives regarding Human Development and Social Justice.⁸⁰ Lastly, Regional Integration is particularly supported by SDG 17 addressing Partnerships.⁸¹

⁶⁴ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016.

⁶⁵ UN ESCWA, *About ESCWA*, 2017.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality: Executive Summary*, 2016.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 99.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

⁷⁶ UN ESCWA, *Arab Sustainable Development Report 2015*, 2016.

⁷⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

⁷⁸ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 14.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Vision 2030 was mandated in ESCWA's document, *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: ESCWA Strategy and Plan of Action* (2015) as part of the commission's efforts to support Member States in achieving the 2030 Agenda.⁸² The Strategy and Plan of Action specifically mentions helping the region identify ways to adapt the SDGs to regional needs by creating a framework and assessment mechanisms, for instance statistical evidence of development, which can be used to form evidence-based policy.⁸³ Vision 2030 recognizes the five pillars as being interconnected and impossible to achieve in isolation of each other, exemplified by the connection between creating new jobs (Transformational Growth), which reduces poverty (Human Development and Social Justice), which in turn contributes to reducing conflict (Peace and Security).⁸⁴ Vision 2030 is a set of policy suggestions, but it also acknowledges the difficulty of applying one-size-fits-all solutions in a diverse region.⁸⁵

ESCWA adopted the *Doha Declaration for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* in 2016.⁸⁶ The Doha Declaration is a commitment by ESCWA Member States to pursue the SDGs at a national and regional level, as guided by the outline provided in Vision 2030.⁸⁷ The Doha Declaration bears the Arab region's development priorities in mind, as explored in national consultations and defined in 15 goals by the *Sharm al-Sheikh Declaration* (2014).⁸⁸ It also calls on Member States to create national plans of action and asks ESCWA's secretariat to provide support and statistical research.⁸⁹ To date, all six ESCWA Member States in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have national development plans based on Vision 2030.⁹⁰

The *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development* (AAAA) (2015) is a global framework which incorporates the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and sets new global expectations on how to fund development efforts.⁹¹ It provides more than 100 policy suggestions for implementation by Member States.⁹² AAAA builds upon the *Monterrey Consensus* (2002) by acknowledging that finance concerns both policy and regulating financial flows.⁹³ Without financing, development is substantially more difficult, which makes the full implementation of this agenda critical to achieving the SDGs.⁹⁴ Instead of emphasizing regional development, AAAA clarifies that every Member State has the ultimate responsibility for their own development.⁹⁵ This standard is embodied in country-specific Vision 2030 plans.⁹⁶

The *Bahrain Document* (2015) is the outcome of the Second Session of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development, which happened ahead of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.⁹⁷ The primary foci of the outcome document are the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, the current framework for regional development, the Arab region's contributions to global development, and how to finance and implement sustainable development.⁹⁸

⁸² UN ESCWA, *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: ESCWA strategy and plan of action (E/ESCWA/2015/EC.2/4(Part I))*, 2015, p. 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁴ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook, Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ UN ESCWA, *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development: From Vision to Action*, 2017, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Wahlen, Arab Countries Renew Pledge to Implement 2030 Agenda, *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 2016.

⁸⁸ UNCCD, *Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2017; UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 100.

⁸⁹ UNCCD, *Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2017.

⁹⁰ Middle East Policy Council, *Policy Brief: GCC Vision 2030*, 2017.

⁹¹ UN General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*, 2015.

⁹² UN DESA, *Financing Sustainable Development and Developing Sustainable Finance*, 2015.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 9.

⁹⁵ UN DESA, *Financing Sustainable Development and Developing Sustainable Finance*, 2015.

⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*, 2015, pp. 4, 37.

⁹⁷ Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development, *Bahrain Document*, 2015.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Role of the International System

As outlined in Vision 2030, ESCWA acts a functional support system for Member States as they integrate the 2030 Agenda at the national level.⁹⁹ In 2016, ESCWA participated in three Development Account programs.¹⁰⁰ These projects increase the ability of Members States to form policies that promote economic participation and access to basic services.¹⁰¹ One of the most pertinent actions ESCWA has taken in regards to Vision 2030 was establishing its Unit on the 2030 Agenda.¹⁰² This unit guides Member States in implementing the SDGs by coordinating ESCWA's initiatives, conducting research, and organizing an annual forum.¹⁰³ ESCWA's Statistics Division has also become more active in collecting data on development in the Arab region.¹⁰⁴ This is especially important for the SDGs, because Arab countries only had data on 42% of the MDGs, and only three Member States had a plan for collecting statistics on development indicators, which limited their ability to track progress and form responsive policy.¹⁰⁵

The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) is an annual functional meeting of international actors, which promotes coordination and information-sharing between UN entities and their regional partners, and facilitates collective action through the creation of task forces, both of which are key to Vision 2030's focus on regionalism.¹⁰⁶ Members of the RCM include members of the League of Arab States (LAS) and the regional bureaus of 36 UN organizations.¹⁰⁷ The RCM focuses on a discussion of regional development priorities, with a final report released after each meeting.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the RCM also ensures policy coherence across UN agencies, and helps facilitate cooperative projects between UN bodies and the LAS by bringing them together to discuss current issues.¹⁰⁹

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an international organization composed of 57 Muslim countries.¹¹⁰ The OIC 2025 Program of Action intersects strongly with the SDGs and Vision 2030, but focuses on the particular development interests of Muslim countries.¹¹¹ This crossover provides an opportunity for further partnership between ESCWA and the OIC in achieving Vision 2030, and much of the work done by Member States to achieve the OIC's Program of Action will also contribute to achieving Vision 2030.¹¹² Likewise, LAS is a group of 22 Arabic-speaking states that contributes to Vision 2030 by working with ESCWA to produce statistical data on development indicators.¹¹³ LAS has had some success with projects like developing school curriculums and creating a regional telecommunications union, which makes it an excellent potential partner in achieving Vision 2030, particularly in the areas of education and infrastructure.¹¹⁴

The GCC is a cooperative group which aims to increase unity among its members (six Persian Gulf states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) through their common objectives and their shared cultural identities.¹¹⁵ The fourth objective of the *Gulf Cooperation Council Charter* (1981) states that it is the purpose of the GCC to stimulate scientific progress, as well as to establish joint ventures between Member States, both of which align closely with Vision 2030.¹¹⁶ All six GCC Member States currently have national plans of action

⁹⁹ UN ESCWA, *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: ESCWA strategy and plan of action (E/ESCWA/2015/EC.2/4(Part I))*, 2015, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ UN ESCWA, *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development: From Vision to Action*, 2017, p. 26.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁴ UN ESCWA, *Statistics*, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Wahlen, Arab Countries Renew Pledge to Implement 2030 Agenda, *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 2016.

¹⁰⁶ UN ESCWA, *Regional Coordination Mechanism*, 2017.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ OIC, *History*, 2017.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Profile: Arab League*, BBC News, 2017; UN ESCWA, *Partners*, 2017.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ GCC, *Charter of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf*, 1981, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

for achieving Vision 2030, and the GCC provides an opportunity to seek greater regional integration to accomplish these goals.¹¹⁷

There are several regional funds that promote economic development in the Arab region, such as the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development, and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).¹¹⁸ In particular, the Arab Monetary Fund, encompassing all 22 Arab Member States, provides loans to states, offers technical assistance, conducts financial research, and consults with Member States on their economic conditions, which is key to achieving the economic growth that is the cornerstone of Vision 2030.¹¹⁹ The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) was established by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).¹²⁰ It was created as a sign of South-South solidarity between OPEC and other developing countries.¹²¹ OFID's resources act as a bonus fund, aside from the funds already available through OPEC states.¹²² OFID finances private sector activities, contributes to development institutions, and provides grants for humanitarian aid.¹²³ OFID works closely with the World Bank and regional development agencies.¹²⁴ Partnerships with these institutions are critical because financing development is a challenge, with an estimated additional \$3.7-4.3 trillion needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030.¹²⁵

ESCWA frequently partners with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to provide key insight and expertise into specific facets of Vision 2030.¹²⁶ For example, at the 2017 Arab Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, representatives from the Arab Organisation of Disabled People addressed the forum and reminded Member States to keep accessibility in mind when drafting their national plans.¹²⁷ Likewise, the Arab Development Portal (ADP) is a collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and 10 regional CSOs, that provides statistical development knowledge about the Arab region.¹²⁸ Created in response to the barriers caused by a lack of statistical knowledge on development indicators, ADP's database contains more than 2,000 different statistical indicators from National Statistical Offices and international organizations.¹²⁹

The Five Pillars of Vision 2030

Peace and Security

Vision 2030 names Peace and Security as a prerequisite to success in the other four areas, specifically mentioning the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the conflict in Syria.¹³⁰ Seven out of 22 Arab countries are currently experiencing conflict and instability.¹³¹ In addition, Vision 2030 names the Syrian civil war as an example of the impact conflicts has on a society, and states that ideally the war would end long before 2030.¹³²

Governance

Vision 2030 has five sub-goals for Governance, which focus on democracy and accountability.¹³³ First, a new governance model based on accountability, transparency and separation of powers will be in place in each Member State by 2030.¹³⁴ Second, roadblocks to democracy will be removed, leading to democratic transitions so that all

¹¹⁷ Middle East Policy Council, *Policy Brief: GCC Vision 2030*, 2017.

¹¹⁸ IDB, *About IDB*, 2017; BADEA, *About BADEA*, 2010; Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, *About AFESD*, 2016; AGFUND, *About Us*, 2017.

¹¹⁹ AMF, *Objectives and Means*.

¹²⁰ OFID, *About us- OFID at a Glance*, 2017.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ UN ESCWA, *Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States*, 2016.

¹²⁶ UN ESCWA, *Partners*, 2017.

¹²⁷ International Disability Alliance, *Arab Regional Forum for Sustainable Development 2017*, 2017.

¹²⁸ ADP, *About Us*, 2017.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 11.

¹³¹ UNCCD, *Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2017.

¹³² UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 11.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

citizens can have a voice in setting policy and holding their leaders accountable.¹³⁵ This necessarily includes increasing partnerships between governments and CSOs, which can monitor potential human rights abuses and corruption.¹³⁶ Third, this increased participation will also help to curb corruption, as will anti-corruption legislation and economic prosperity.¹³⁷ Fourth, key human services systems like health and education will be strengthened and all citizens will be given equal access to them, regardless of demographic factors.¹³⁸ Finally, countries afflicted by violence and least developed countries (LDCs) will begin to approach international median scores in governance indicators like accountability, rule of law, and corruption.¹³⁹

Transformational Growth

This goal focuses primarily on environmentally sustainable development and a shift away from reliance on oil.¹⁴⁰ Many Arab states rely heavily on oil revenues for their annual budgets, which makes both their governments and economies extremely vulnerable to the changing price of commodities.¹⁴¹ Moving toward an economy based on human capital, the service sector, and technology, supports diversification away from commodity reliance and increases economic opportunity.¹⁴² The sub-goals are to bolster economic growth, lower unemployment, and reduce inequality through macroeconomic policy.¹⁴³ There is also a subsection dedicated to green development, in particular moving toward clean energy and ensuring access to clean drinking water.¹⁴⁴

Human Development and Social Justice

This pillar focuses largely on human rights-centric development indicators, such as extreme poverty, malnutrition, infant mortality, maternal mortality, the pupil-teacher ratio, literacy, numeracy, discrimination against women and girls, and effective wage policies.¹⁴⁵ Vision 2030 also endorses boosting food production and establishing a regional food bank.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, there are two tangible goals of eliminating poverty under \$1.90 a day and cutting poverty in half.¹⁴⁷ The pillar also discusses decreased infant mortality, increasing women’s participation in the workforce, and improving HDI scores.¹⁴⁸

Regional Integration

This pillar calls for an Arab Citizens Common Economic Security Space (ACCESS) that would seek to further three sub-goals, two of which are reviving Arab culture through recognizing past achievements, and enhancing the Arabic language.¹⁴⁹ Vision 2030 posits that the integration efforts previously undertaken with non-Arab countries will need to be re-evaluated and adapted to serve Arab regional integration, rather than undermining it.¹⁵⁰ Regional integration promotes faster conflict resolution, quality governance, and technology sharing.¹⁵¹

Successes

Just over a year after the adoption of Vision 2030, some progress has been made, as demonstrated by ADP’s statistical data system.¹⁵² In 2016, ESCWA helped Member States and regional financial institutions develop more competitive trade policies by facilitating talks, which is in line with the fifth goal of Regional Integration.¹⁵³ In

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁵² ADP, *About Us*, 2017.

¹⁵³ UN ESCWA, *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development: From Vision to Action*, 2017, p. 31.

particular, ESCWA is stimulating regional economic progress by facilitating discussions for the implementation of the Arab Customs Union (ACU), which would be a free trade area with a common tariff on goods outside the union.¹⁵⁴ ESCWA also supported implementing resolutions adopted at high-level regional fora, especially the Arab Economic and Social Development summits, which resulted in the goals of creating a Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), establishing an ACU, and creating a common market.¹⁵⁵

Each Member State is required to form a national plan that is tailored to their individual needs, which leads to more effective development and increases the ownership of that country over its own development.¹⁵⁶ Several Member States have already created 2030 national plans with guidance and support from ESCWA, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's *Saudi Vision 2030* (2016).¹⁵⁷ *Saudi Vision 2030* is based on three pillars: "a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation," which remains in line with Vision 2030.¹⁵⁸ *Saudi Vision 2030* focuses heavily on diversifying the Saudi economy away from oil and reducing unemployment for a rapidly growing youth population.¹⁵⁹ Saudi Arabia plans to transition its Public Investment Fund into a sovereign wealth fund, to allow for greater investment diversification, boost the economic contribution of the private sector to 65% of GDP, reduce unemployment by four points to seven percent, reform education, and develop better infrastructure.¹⁶⁰ Saudi Arabia has chosen to break down the 15-year period into intervals starting with the National Transformation Program (NTP) 2020, which converts those long-term goals into targets that can be met in the short term.¹⁶¹ In 2017, Saudi Arabia passed a law allowing women to drive, which is a concrete step toward achieving their national Vision 2030, and which will allow for both greater social and economic equity.¹⁶²

Opportunities and Challenges

In 2016, ESCWA noted that reinforcing GAFTA was an opportunity to promote greater regional integration.¹⁶³ ESCWA is currently working with LAS and other regional organizations in negotiating an ACU.¹⁶⁴ The level of economic integration in the Arab region is currently quite limited, especially in terms of trade.¹⁶⁵ Arab leaders intended to create the ACU in 2015 with the help of the LAS, but implementation has proven difficult, although the terms have been negotiated.¹⁶⁶ The ACU would apply new tariff rates, which would impact customs revenue and have potentially positive welfare impacts.¹⁶⁷ ESCWA plans to use resources and cooperation funds to assist Member States in the implementation of the Customs Union.¹⁶⁸

A greater level of coordination is needed to respond to regional food insecurity, particularly in the improvement of land management and crop production.¹⁶⁹ A primary cause of food insecurity in the region is that water-conserving states import food instead of producing it.¹⁷⁰ The plans for addressing food insecurity in Vision 2030 include boosting production, creating an Arab food security partnership network, and creating a regional food bank with a grain reserve.¹⁷¹ However, Arab Member States can engage in unilateral and mutually exclusive instances of integration with non-Arab countries, and these arrangements may sometimes take precedence over Arab integration.¹⁷² For instance, several Arab states want to join the African Common Market as well as the ACU, which

¹⁵⁴ UN ESCWA, *Facilitating the Implementation of the Arab Customs Union*, 2015, 2017.

¹⁵⁵ UN ESCWA, *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development: From Vision to Action*, 2017, p. 31.

¹⁵⁶ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, *Saudi Vision 2030*, 2016.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁹ Fox, Opinion: How Saudi Arabia is Steering the Way to Vision 2030, *Arabian Business News*, 2017.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ UN ESCWA, *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development: From Vision to Action*, 2017, p. 36.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁵ UN ESCWA, *Facilitating the Implementation of the Arab Customs Union*, 2015, 2017.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ UNDP, *About Arab States*, 2017.

¹⁷⁰ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 73.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

gives the dual-membership countries unfair advantages, and fosters ill will among Member States that consider it a betrayal of the region to be a part of both unions.¹⁷³

In 2014, the price of oil dropped to \$30 per barrel, which caused a large budget deficit for oil-producing states, acting as a reminder of the need for diverse economies.¹⁷⁴ Undiversified economies are more likely to suffer from recession, and budget deficits like the ones resulting from the oil market crash prevent effective investment in development.¹⁷⁵ The Pan-Arab Renewable Energy Strategy 2030 projects a quintupling of renewable power generation by 2030.¹⁷⁶ Vision 2030 also notes that Europe has a need for renewables, and Desertec (a strategic technology which entails collecting solar power in areas with substantial land and light) creates a potential for the Arab world to remain the world's primary energy exporter without relying on oil.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

ESCWA's work on meeting Vision 2030 is critical to the accomplishment the 2030 Agenda.¹⁷⁸ Vision 2030 is often more ambitious than the SDGs themselves, containing detailed plans of action and goals set specifically for the Arab region, while also being consistent with the SDGs.¹⁷⁹ Of all the challenges facing development in the Arab Region, conflict poses the greatest barrier.¹⁸⁰ However, poor governance sits at the heart of internal conflicts and civil wars.¹⁸¹ All five pillars are woven together and deeply connected.¹⁸² By taking advantage of these synergies and understanding the impact each pillar has on the others, comprehensive, unified development can be achieved by ESCWA in the Arab region.¹⁸³

Further Research

To prepare for the conference, delegates should direct their research toward understanding the status quo and the relationships between pillars. What actions have Member States taken that have worked particularly well toward achieving Vision 2030? What are the opportunities and challenges for specific Member States? Which countries are dependent on oil and revenue from fossil fuels, and how can they move away from this dependence? How has the average income and the average inequality-adjusted income shifted since the MDGs? What is the relation between the economic health of ESCWA members and the political will to achieve Vision 2030? How can regional cooperation accelerate development and achieving Vision 2030?

Annotated Bibliography

Arab Development Portal. (2017). *About Us* [Website]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://arabdevelopmentportal.com/node/6142>

This website contains data on a range of development statistics for every ESCWA Member State. It provides a broad scope of knowledge on all key aspects of development in the Arab region, including finance, demography, health, poverty, and the environment. This source is critical because a lack of statistical data on development indicators damaged the region's ability to meet the MDGs prior to 2015. Delegates should use this resource to explore data-based policy options for the region.

Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development. (2015). *Bahrain Document* [Report]. Retrieved 2 September 2017 from: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/SDPD/3572/ForumOutcome.pdf>

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁷⁴ *The Hidden Consequences of the Oil Crash*, Politico Magazine, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Mohaved, Why should resource-based economies diversify?, *Al Jazeera*, 2013.

¹⁷⁶ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, p. 96.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2016, pp. 13, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 16

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 16.

The Bahrain Document is the result of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development, held during the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. It captures the learning-oriented spirit of the transition, and highlights key concerns and areas of focus for development. In addition, because it is a collaboration between Member States, UN bodies, and CSOs, it represents both international best practices and region-specific development positions. Delegates will find this to be a useful guide to lessons learned in the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, and to the development paradigm in the Arab Region

Fox, T. (2017, October 6). Opinion: How Saudi Arabia is Steering the Way to Vision 2030. *Arabian Business*. Retrieved 6 October 2017 from: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/opinion/comment/380523-opinion-how-saudi-arabia-is-steering-the-way-to-vision-2030>

This news article is a reflection on the successes and failures of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 after one year. One item of particular note in the article is that the financing for Saudi Arabia's development is contingent on foreign money coming into their oil industry, which is not compatible with Vision 2030's focus on moving away from fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is an important case study for other Member States that seek to implement the Arab Development Outlook at the national level. The challenges presented here will help to guide delegates' proposals on implementation processes moving forward.

United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States. (2016). *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality: Executive Summary*. Retrieved 3 October 2017 from: <http://www.arab-hdr.org/reports/2016/english/ExecutiveENG.pdf>

The 2016 Arab Human Development Report provides a critical overview of the region's current development status. The 2016 version of the report focuses heavily on youth integration, as young people struggle to enter a cramped workforce, which places pressure on peace in the region. This executive summary of the report introduces the document in an accessible way. The Development Report presents successes and challenges along several metrics, including unemployment, gender equality, and access to health services. This document is useful for delegates because it presents a comprehensive analysis of issues targeting a key population in the Arab Region.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2015). *Facilitating the Implementation of the Arab Customs Union* [Report]. Retrieved 3 October 2017 from: http://www.un.org/esa/devaccount/projects/2016/1617%20Concept%20Papers/1617AG_ESCWA_CN%20as%20per%20fascicle_29-04-2015.docx

This source is an ESCWA report on the Arab Customs Union, explaining what it entails, why it is not already in place, and what actions have been taken toward its implementation. The Arab Customs Union is a key part of Arab regional integration and economic growth, both of which are primary foci in Vision 2030. Delegates should consider this document an introduction on the status of the Arab Customs Union and should use it to build their roadmap for implementation.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030* [Report]. Retrieved 31 July 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/arab-development-outlook-vision-2030-english.pdf>

Vision 2030 is ESCWA's regional plan for achieving the SDGs. It provides critical first steps for the members of ESCWA, an analysis of key issues facing the region, and several adaptable policy reforms. Vision 2030 is a comprehensive strategy that shows the regional perspective of sustainable development priorities, notably highlighting conflict as a major detriment to progress. To discuss how to achieve Vision 2030, it is vital for delegates to have a comprehensive understanding of the document itself.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States: Implementation challenges at a national level* [Report]. Retrieved 24 October 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/implementation_of_the_2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development_in_the_arab_states.pdf

This ESCWA report details the challenges Member States may face when implementing Vision 2030 at the national level. The potential problems in this report heavily influenced the Doha Declaration, which was adopted in the same session. This document provides key background information about the UN development framework as it applied to the Arab region, and breaks down potential challenges by subject area. Delegates will find this to be particularly useful when considering potential proposals to achieving Vision 2030.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development: From Vision to Action*. Retrieved 1 August 2017 from:

<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/annual-report-2016-english.pdf>

This the most recent annual report on ESCWA's activities. It presents ESCWA's current work on Vision 2030, as well as other overlapping development projects. It also mentions the recent adoption of the Doha Declaration as part of ESCWA's recent work on Vision 2030. Being familiar with ESCWA's Annual Reports will help inform delegates of current developments and will keep them updated on the challenges that remain regarding development within the Arab region.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Executive Committee. (2015). *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: ESCWA strategy and plan of action*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from:

<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/1500483.pdf>

The Strategy and Plan of Action represents ESCWA's initial plan to achieve the SDGs in the Arab Region. This document was the catalyst to the creation of the Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030, and situates it in the context of ESCWA's other actions regarding the SDGs. This document is a necessary part of any delegate's research, because it establishes the context for Vision 2030 and provides insight into the evolution of the policy regarding the topic. Most importantly, the Strategy and Plan of Action was based directly on an ESCWA review of specific challenges Member States may face in achieving the SDGs, meaning it is the first document to transform challenges facing the region into strategies.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the reason that Vision 2030 exists. It presents an overview of the generalized principles underlying sustainable development strategies. This document provokes a comparison of the similarities and differences between the SDGs and Vision 2030, making it critical reading for those seeking to understand the Arab perspective on sustainable development.

Bibliography

Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa. (2010). *About BADEA* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: http://www.badea.org/about_badea.htm

Arab Development Portal. (2017). *About Us* [Website]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://arabdevelopmentportal.com/node/6142>

Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. (2016). *About AFESD* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://www.arabfund.org/Default.aspx?pageId=10&mid=21>

Arab Gulf Program for Development. (2017). *About Us* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://agfund.org/about-us/>

Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development. (2015). *Bahrain Document*. Retrieved 2 September 2017 from: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/SDPD/3572/ForumOutcome.pdf>

Arab Monetary Fund. (n.d.). *Objectives and Means* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://www.amf.org.ae/en/page/objectives-and-means>

- Culbertson, S. (2016, April 20). Tunisia is an Arab Spring Success Story. *Observer*. Retrieved 23 October 2017 from: <http://observer.com/2016/04/tunisia-is-an-arab-spring-success-story/>
- Fox, T. (2017, October 6). Opinion: How Saudi Arabia is Steering the Way to Vision 2030. *Arabian Business*. Retrieved 6 October 2017 from: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/opinion/comment/380523-opinion-how-saudi-arabia-is-steering-the-way-to-vision-2030>
- Gulf Cooperation Council. (1981). *Charter of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201288/volume-1288-I-21244-English.pdf>
- International Disability Alliance. (2017). *Arab Regional Forum for Sustainable Development 2017* [Website]. Retrieved 1 October 2017 from: <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/arab-regional-2017>
- Islamic Development Bank. (2017). *About IDB* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://www.isdb.org/irj/portal/anonymouse?NavigationTarget=navurl://24de0d5f10da906da85e96ac356b7af0>
- Middle East Policy Council. (2017). *Policy Brief: GCC Vision 2030* [Website]. Retrieved 1 October 2017 from: <http://www.mepc.org/policy-brief-gcc-vision-2030>
- Mohaved, M. (2013, January 25). Why should resource-based economies diversify?. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved 24 October 2017 from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/01/2013116152324850803.html>
- OPEC Fund for International Development. (2017). *About us: OFID at a Glance* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://www.ofid.org/ABOUT-US>
- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. (2017). *History* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: http://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en
- Profile: Arab League*. (2017, August 24). BBC News. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15747941>
- Soergel, A. (2015, July 16). Where are all the workers?. *U.S. News*. Retrieved 24 October 2017 from: <https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2015/07/16/unemployment-is-low-but-more-workers-are-leaving-the-workforce>
- Tausch, A. (2013, December 11). *A look at international survey data about Arab opinion*. Rubin Center. Retrieved 23 October 2017 from: <http://www.rubincenter.org/2013/12/a-look-at-international-survey-data-about-arab-opinion/>
- The Hidden Consequences of the Oil Crash*. (2016, January 21). Politico Magazine. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/oil-crash-hidden-consequences-213550>
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (2016). *Saudi Vision 2030*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: http://vision2030.gov.sa/sites/default/files/report/Saudi_Vision2030_EN_0.pdf
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. (2017). *Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://knowledge.unccd.int/publications/doha-declaration-implementation-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). *Financing Sustainable Development and Developing Sustainable Finance* [Background Note]. Retrieved 1 October 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/DESA-Briefing-Note-Addis-Action-Agenda.pdf>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2016, November 29). *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Enabling youth to shape their own future key to progress on development and stability in Arab region* [News Article]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from:

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2016/11/29/arab-human-development-report-2016-enabling-youth-to-shape-their-own-future-key-to-progress-on-development-and-stability-in-arab-region-.html>

United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *About Arab States* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/regioninfo.html>

United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States. (2016). *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality: Executive Summary*. Retrieved 3 October 2017 from: <http://www.arab-hdr.org/reports/2016/english/ExecutiveENG.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2015). *Facilitating the Implementation of the Arab Customs Union* [Report]. Retrieved 3 October 2017 from: http://www.un.org/esa/devaccount/projects/2016/1617%20Concept%20Papers/1617AG_ESCWA_CN%20as%20per%20fascicle_29-04-2015.docx

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030* [Report]. Retrieved 31 July 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/arab-development-outlook-vision-2030-english.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States: Implementation challenges at a national level* [Report]. Retrieved 24 October 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/implementation_of_the_2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development_in_the_arab_states.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *About ESCWA* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/about-escwa>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Annual Report 2016: Sustainable Development: From Vision to Action*. Retrieved 1 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/annual-report-2016-english.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Partners* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/work-us/partners>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Regional Coordination Mechanism* [Website]. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/about-escwa/regional-coordination-mechanism>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Statistics* [Website]. Retrieved 1 October 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/statistics>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Executive Committee. (2015). *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: ESCWA strategy and plan of action (E/ESCWA/2015/EC.2/4(Part I))*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/1500483.pdf>

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixth-ninth session. (2015). *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/69/313>

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>
 Wahlén, C. (2016, December 19). Arab Countries Renew Pledge to Implement 2030 Agenda. *International Institute for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 3 September 2017 from: <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/arab-countries-renew-pledge-to-implement-2030-agenda/>

II. Strengthening Arab Least Developed Countries

Introduction

Since 1971, the United Nations (UN) has recognized a sub-set of countries with distinct development needs.¹⁸⁴ The UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), a subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), defines least developed countries (LDCs) as “low-income developing countries suffering from severe structural impediments to sustainable development.”¹⁸⁵ Due to structural, historical, and geographical reasons, LDCs face a high risk of underdevelopment and extreme poverty.¹⁸⁶ LDCs comprise 12% of the global population, but control less than one percent of global trade and comprise under two percent of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁸⁷ About 800 million people worldwide are extremely vulnerable to the effects of economic crises, environmental disasters, and transmissible diseases.¹⁸⁸ Altogether, 47 countries are currently ranked as LDCs.¹⁸⁹ CDP qualifies countries as LDCs if they present an average Gross National Income (GNI) of less than \$1,035 per year; fall below specific development thresholds for nutrition, health, education, and literacy; and demonstrate significant structural impediments under the Economic Vulnerability Index.¹⁹⁰ Countries can graduate from the LDC category if they progress beyond defined thresholds.¹⁹¹ Based on CDP’s recommendations, ECOSOC reviews the list of LDC countries every three years and makes graduation recommendations to the UN General Assembly.¹⁹² The UN General Assembly takes note of these recommendations and elects to add or “graduate” countries from the LDC list.¹⁹³ Although some Member States have been able to graduate from the ranks of LDCs, most LDCs face severe difficulties and need outside support to overcome these barriers to graduation.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), countries ranked as LDCs need the highest degree of attention from the UN and its Member States.¹⁹⁵

Among the Member States of the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), Mauritania, Sudan, and Yemen are ranked as LDCs.¹⁹⁶ According to ESCWA, none are expected to graduate from the LDC list in the immediate future.¹⁹⁷ However, the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should ensure that no country and no people are left behind.¹⁹⁸ Only if the needs of LDCs are adequately addressed, may the SDGs succeed.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, it is of utmost importance for regional commissions like ESCWA to carefully review and adapt Plans of Action for the LDCs among their membership.²⁰⁰

International and Regional Framework

Since the first list of LDCs was adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 26/2768 of 1971 on “Identification of the least developed among the developing countries,” the needs of LDCs have been highlighted in various

¹⁸⁴ UNCTAD, *Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*.

¹⁸⁵ UN DESA, *Handbook on the Least Developed Country Category: Inclusion, Graduation and Special Support Measures*, 2015, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ UNCTAD, *Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, UN-OHRLLS, *About LDCs*, 2017.

¹⁸⁸ UNCTAD, *Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*.

¹⁸⁹ UN CDP & UN DESA, *List of Least Developed Countries (as of June 2017)*, 2017, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ UNCTAD, *UN recognition of Least Developed Countries (LDC)*; UN-OHRLLS, *Criteria for Identification and Graduation of LDCs*, 2017.

¹⁹¹ UN DESA, *LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators*.

¹⁹² UNCTAD, *UN recognition of Least Developed Countries (LDC)*; UN-OHRLLS, *Criteria for Identification and Graduation of LDCs*, 2017.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ African Development Bank, *Cape Verde. A Success Story*, 2012, p. 3; Oxley, *Five challenges for Least Developed Countries in the post-2015 era*, 2016.

¹⁹⁵ UNCTAD, *Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*.

¹⁹⁶ UN ESCWA, *Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*, 2017.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ UN-OHRLLS, *Priorities of LDCs in the context of the SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, 2016, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ UN ESCWA, *Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*, 2017.

outcome documents.²⁰¹ The *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development* adopted in 2002 called upon Member States to increase financial support for LDCs in fields such as infrastructure, health, transportation, communication, and energy supply.²⁰² The *Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development* (2002) encouraged Member States to facilitate better foreign direct investment (FDI) and to enable market access for LDCs without duty or quota limitations.²⁰³ According to the Monterrey Consensus, Official Development Assistance (ODA) providers should also consider contributing at least 0.15% to 0.2% of their gross national product to LDCs.²⁰⁴ In 2008, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Doha Declaration on Financing for Development*, which reaffirmed the Monterrey commitments.²⁰⁵ The *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*, adopted in 2015 by the General Assembly in resolution 69/283, emphasized the importance of support for disaster risk reduction in LDCs.²⁰⁶ Similarly, the *Paris Agreement*, adopted at the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015, highlighted the need to strengthen capacity for LDCs vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and urged States parties to increase funding and the transfer of technology.²⁰⁷ LDCs are also addressed in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* adopted in 2015.²⁰⁸ Many targets of the 2030 Agenda particularly refer to LDCs; for example: enhancing agriculture productive capacity (Target 2.b) in order to use the primary economic activity of LDCs to eradicate hunger and poverty, increasing the number of available scholarships by 2020 and qualified teachers (Targets 4.b and 4.c.), enabling infrastructure expansion and sustainable energy (Target 7.b), achieving a yearly seven percent gross domestic product growth in LDCs (Target 8.1), and enabling access to information and communication technology (ICT) in LDCs by 2020 (Target 9.c).²⁰⁹ In the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (AAAA) (2015), Member States committed to promote investment in the economic and technical capacities of LDCs, and to attract FDI.²¹⁰

Four UN conferences have focused solely on LDCs.²¹¹ The latest conference, which took place in Turkey in 2011, adopted the *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020* (IPoA).²¹² The IPoA addresses sustainable development of LDCs for a ten-year period, with special regard to strengthening productive capacities of LDCs.²¹³ Additional conferences, such as the Cotonou Conference, discussed the timely and fully implementation of the IPoA.²¹⁴ The *Cotonou Agenda for productive capacity building in LDCs* (2014) reaffirms the commitments to achieve IPoA priority areas, such as productive capacity building or agriculture.²¹⁵ Finally, the *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030* presents a targeted framework for the sustainable development of Arab states, with a focus on the unique needs of Arab LDCs.²¹⁶

²⁰¹ UN General Assembly, *Identification of the least developed among the developing countries (A/RES/26/2768 (XXVI))*, 1971, p. 1.

²⁰² World Summit on Sustainable Development, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.199/20)*, 2002, pp. 17, 24, 38, 47, 57.

²⁰³ International Conference on Financing for Development, *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development (A/CONF.198/11)*, pp. 8–9.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ UN General Assembly, *Doha Declaration on Financing for Development: outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (A/RES/63/239)*, 2008.

²⁰⁶ UN General Assembly, *Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (A/RES/69/283)*, 2015, p. 21.

²⁰⁷ COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015, pp. 3, 15.

²⁰⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20; UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 22.

²¹⁰ UN DESA, *Countries reach historic agreement to generate financing for new sustainable development agenda*, 2015.

²¹¹ UN-OHRLLS, *About LDCs*, 2017.

²¹² UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action – 2011*; UN General Assembly, *Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/66/213)*, 2012.

²¹³ UN-OHRLLS, *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action – 2011*.

²¹⁴ Wahlén, LDCs Conference Discusses Building Productive Capacity, *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 2014; UNCTAD, *Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 2014.

²¹⁶ UN ESCWA, *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030*, 2015.

Role of the International System

ECOSOC submits recommendations to the General Assembly regarding membership on the LDC list.²¹⁷ Countries on the LDC list benefit from preferential market access, technical assistance for the integration of trade into their development plans and sectoral budget strategies for public and private entities, and development financing.²¹⁸ In resolution 56/227 of 2001 on the “3rd UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries,” the General Assembly established the role of the UN High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).²¹⁹ UN-OHRLLS monitors the implementation of the LDC Programmes of Action, such as IPoA, and provides assistance to the UN Secretary-General to ensure full coordination of all relevant UN entities involved in their implementation.²²⁰ Its key functions also include advocacy work and to support the mobilization of financial resources for LDCs.²²¹ In resolution 71/251 of 2016, on the “Establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries,” the General Assembly established a new technology bank responsible for making technological and scientific solutions accessible to LDCs.²²²

The CDP reviews the status of LDCs and monitors the progress of former LDCs after their graduation.²²³ Other activities of the CDP Secretariat focus on providing training and policy advisory activities for all stakeholders responsible for promoting sustainable growth in LDCs.²²⁴ The CDP Secretariat also developed the Support Measures Portal for Least Developed Countries.²²⁵ The portal allows stakeholders in LDCs to get access to projects, loans, and grants from national financial development organizations or university scholarship programs.²²⁶ Similarly, UNCTAD plays a crucial role in supporting LDCs.²²⁷ The conference, which usually meets once every four years, addresses all aspects of development such as financial volatility and debt, trade, and the transfer of technology.²²⁸ UNCTAD provides LDCs with technical support to implement policies, regulations, and institutional frameworks to transform their economies and build better governance.²²⁹ For economies in transition, such as Yemen, UNCTAD provides training modules on economic and technical aspects of multilateral trading systems.²³⁰ UNCTAD also publishes the *Least Developed Countries Report*, a socio-economic analysis and data on LDCs for governments, policymakers, and researchers.²³¹

The World Trade Organization (WTO), which regulates the global rules of trade, plays a significant role in supporting LDCs.²³² Even if LDCs have industrial sectors for export, they often cannot meet the food quality and safety standards of importer countries and thus lack access to international markets.²³³ LDCs can partner with the WTO in order to address food safety and quality standards.²³⁴ In 1997, the WTO held a High-Level Meeting on LDCs' Trade Development, where it established a program to promote the participation of LDCs in the global economy.²³⁵ Known as the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), the WTO program works with multiple global

²¹⁷ UNCTAD, *UN recognition of Least Developed Countries (LDC)*.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Enhanced Integrated Framework, *Trade Mainstreaming*.

²¹⁹ UN General Assembly, *3rd UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/56/227)*, 2001, p. 1.

²²⁰ UN-OHRLLS, *About UN-OHRLLS*, 2017; UN-OHRLLS, *UN-OHRLLS mandate for Least Developed Countries*, 2017.

²²¹ UN-OHRLLS, *About UN-OHRLLS*, 2017.

²²² UN General Assembly, *Establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/71/251)*, 2016; UN DPI, *Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries Operationalized, 22 September, 2017*.

²²³ UN DESA, *About Secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy*.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ UN CDP, *Support Measures Portal for Least Developed Countries*.

²²⁶ UN CDP, *Development Assistance related International Support Measures*; UN CDP, *General Support related International Support Measures*.

²²⁷ UNCTAD, *About UNCTAD*.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ UNCTAD, *UNCTAD Toolbox: Delivering Results*, 2015.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²³¹ UNCTAD, *The Least Developed Countries Report*; UNCTAD, *The Least Developed Countries Report 2016: The Path to Graduation and Beyond – Making the Most of the Process*, 2016, p. IV.

²³² World Trade Organization, *What we do*, 2017.

²³³ UNCTAD, UNCTAD's input to a concept note on theme 5: "Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for a small scale artisans fishers to marine resources and market", 2017, p. 2.

²³⁴ WTO, *Towards free market access for least-developed countries*, 2001.

²³⁵ WTO, *Enhanced Integrated Framework*, 2017.

donors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Trade Centre (ITC), UNCTAD, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, and WTO to provide LDCs with technical support and trade policy recommendations.²³⁶ The Arab LDCs receive support from EIF projects.²³⁷

The regional commissions of ECOSOC, including ESCWA, advise Member States on economic integration measures, such as mainstreaming national policies to establish an Arab trade and economic union, and provide technical support to implement international agreements such as the SDGs.²³⁸ ESCWA promotes intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation.²³⁹ This includes best practice and knowledge-sharing, the promotion of multilateral dialogues, and the establishment of regional networks.²⁴⁰ ESCWA advocates at the international level for the special needs of Arab LDCs; recent examples include the 3rd Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the second United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of 2016.²⁴¹ It also prepares progress reports on IPoA implementation.²⁴² ESCWA also assists Member States with the implementation of the AAAA, helps to attract investments, and to enhance their debt management capacities.²⁴³ The work of ESCWA has an impact on the LDC criteria and affects the priority areas for action for LDCs.²⁴⁴ This includes the promotion of good economic governance to strengthen inclusive development or trade integration.²⁴⁵

Other regional trade initiatives include the European Union's (EU) "Everything but Arms" arrangement, launched in 2001.²⁴⁶ With the exception of arms and munitions, this regulation grants LDCs duty-free and quota-free access to the EU Single Market.²⁴⁷ In 2017, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to which all ESCWA LDCs belong, adopted the *OIC-2025: Programme Of Action*, which aims to promote trade exchange between OIC Member States, and highlights the need to increase investments in all OIC Member States.²⁴⁸ The program stresses the need for socio-economic empowerment, health, and good governance, all of which have an impact on LDC indicators.²⁴⁹ Likewise, various national, regional and international Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) promote sustainable development in LDCs.²⁵⁰ LDC Watch is an alliance of these CSOs which supports the implementation of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda.²⁵¹ Other examples include Social Watch, a network of citizens' organizations which focus on the fulfillment of commitments to poverty eradication, and the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), which aims to promote socio-economic reforms and sustainable development in the Arab region.²⁵²

Economic Development of LDCs

Productive capacity

One major challenge for LDCs is their limited productive capacity, as they struggle to diversify their economies or achieve efficient production.²⁵³ According to UNCTAD, productive capacity is defined as "productive resources,

²³⁶ World Trade Organization, *Towards free market access for least-developed countries*, 2001; World Trade Organization, *Enhanced Integrated Framework*, 2017.

²³⁷ Enhanced Integrated Framework, *Countries*, 2017.

²³⁸ UN Regional Commissions Office in New York City, *What we do*; UN ESCWA, *Assessing Arab Economic Integration: Towards the Arab Customs Union - Summary – Summary*, 2015, p. 1.

²³⁹ UN Regional Commissions Office in New York City, *What we do*.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ UN ESCWA, *Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*, 2017.

²⁴² UN ESCWA, *Istanbul Plan of Action for Least Developed Countries in the ESCWA Region, Progress Report of Yemen and Sudan*, 2015, p. 4; UN ESCWA, *In the Run towards the 3rd Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2nd UN Environment Assembly*, 2016.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, UN ESCWA, *Financing for Development*, 2017.

²⁴⁴ UN ESCWA, *Economic Development and Integration*, 2017.

²⁴⁵ UN ESCWA, *Economic Governance and Planning*, 2017; UN ESCWA, *Trade Integration*, 2017.

²⁴⁶ European Commission, *Everything but Arms*, 2017.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ OIC, *The OIC-2025 Programme of Action (OIC/SUM-13/2016/POA-Final)*, 2016, p. 21.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4; UN DESA, *LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators*.

²⁵⁰ LDC Watch, *About LDC Watch*, 2017.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Social Watch, *About us*; Arab NGO Network for Development, *Mission and Vision*, 2017.

²⁵³ UN-OHRLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 16.

entrepreneurial capabilities and production linkages which together determine the capacity of a country to produce goods and services and enable it to grow and develop.²⁵⁴ The CDP has identified the sustainable use of existing resources, economic specialization, good development governance, and economic diversification as effective pathways for strengthening productive capacities.²⁵⁵ A diversified economy based on independent sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, and services enables countries to more easily integrate into the international economic system.²⁵⁶ However, the success of these industries depends on the presence of well-developed infrastructure, access to energy, and a strong private sector.²⁵⁷ With respect to infrastructure, the IPoA calls upon Member States to expand access to ICTs for all LDCs by 2020 (Target 9.c) and to use renewable energy sources to increase the supply for primary energy and for electricity generation.²⁵⁸ Mauritania, one of the ESCWA Member States, has successfully implemented an intercity modern roads investment project to strengthen its infrastructure as a first step to increase productive capacity.²⁵⁹

Agriculture and food security

Agriculture represents the primary economic activity for most LDCs.²⁶⁰ Seventy percent of Sudanese citizens and more than 50% of the populations in Mauritania and Yemen depend on agriculture for their livelihood.²⁶¹ Agriculture has an impact on the eradication of hunger and poverty.²⁶² Households can harvest crops to prevent malnutrition; in rural areas, agriculture allows people to create income, which governments can tax to finance infrastructure and healthcare projects.²⁶³ However, this sector suffers from severe challenges, including lack of investment.²⁶⁴ LDC Watch underlines that LDCs need to implement strategies including social protection and land registration programs, enable access to better market information for farmers, and promote agricultural diversification.²⁶⁵ One example is Yemen, where the government has launched the *National Agriculture Sector Strategy 2012-2016*, which aims to raise awareness among farmers to avoid post-harvest losses, and enables them to access financial resources.²⁶⁶ In the field of food security, ESCWA has partnered with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to launch a regional capacity development project.²⁶⁷ In 2015, ESCWA published the report *Pathways towards Food Security in the Arab Region: An Assessment of Wheat Availability*, addressing food security, with recommendations for its Member States to coordinate investments, research, and data management.²⁶⁸

²⁵⁴ UNCTAD, *The Least Developed Countries Report 2006. Developing Productive Capacities*, 2006, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ UN CDP, *Lessons learned in developing productive capacities from countries graduating and graduated from the LDC category*, 2017, pp. 1-4.

²⁵⁶ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 17.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 21.

²⁵⁹ UN-OHRLLS, *Lessons learned from five years of implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries*, 2016, pp. 5, 7.

²⁶⁰ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 22.

²⁶¹ UN-OHRLLS, *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report*, 2016, p. 4; FAO, *Integrated Production and Pest Management Programme in Africa*, 2017; UNDP & Republic of Yemen, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, *A Promising sector for Diversified Economy in Yemen: National Agriculture Sector Strategy 2012-2016*, 2012, p. 13.

²⁶² UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 22.

²⁶³ Fan, *How agriculture can improve health and nutrition*, 2015.

²⁶⁴ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 22.

²⁶⁵ Segal, *Food security in the Least Developed Countries*, 2011, pp. 8-9.

²⁶⁶ UN ESCWA, *Istanbul Plan of Action for Least Developed Countries in the ESCWA Region, Progress Report of Yemen and Sudan*, 2015, p. 16.

²⁶⁷ UN ESCWA, *Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region*, 2017, p. 4.

²⁶⁸ UN ESCWA, *Pathways towards Food Security in the Arab Region: An Assessment of Wheat Availability*, 2015, pp. 54-55.

Financing LDCs

Trade

Although LDCs have nearly doubled their share of international trade in the past 10 years, they still control only about one percent of global trade and rely upon a limited number of export products.²⁶⁹ Target 11 of SDG 17 aims to significantly increase the LDC share of global exports by 2020.²⁷⁰ However, restrictive trade policies, such as non-tariff barriers, may prevent LDC-based products from reaching regional or international markets.²⁷¹ Intra-Arab trade remains low compared to other regional trade markets, which further hinders the opportunities of Arab LDCs.²⁷² In 2005, Arab states implemented the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area (PAFTA), a regional trade organization consisting of 18 Arab states, including all three Arab LDCs.²⁷³ In 2009, Arab leaders established an Arab Customs Union (ACU).²⁷⁴ However, progress of both initiatives has remained limited.²⁷⁵

Mobilizing financial resources for development

The lack of financial resources is one of the most severe problems faced by LDCs.²⁷⁶ LDCs often suffer from low per capita income, have hardly any domestic savings, and lack sustainable investments or tax revenues.²⁷⁷ One instrument established to address these issues is the Addis Tax Initiative introduced in 2015, which promotes sustainable systems of revenue and taxation.²⁷⁸ However, internal revenue policies are not sufficient, since LDCs' governmental budgets often depend on external financial resources such as ODA, FDI, and concessional lending, which is defined as loans offered below market interest rates.²⁷⁹ UN-OHRLLS has called upon Member States to fulfill their ODA commitments as recommended in the AAAA; furthermore, UN-OHRLLS has urged LDCs to implement measures which attract public and private investment and mobilize domestic resources.²⁸⁰ Additionally, as highlighted in the IPOA midterm review of 2016, combatting illicit financial flows should be a priority when addressing financial resources for LDCs.²⁸¹ UN-OHRLLS underlines that corruption in LDCs needs to be reduced and transparency needs to be increased by adopting appropriate regulatory measures and strengthening institutional capacities.²⁸² This requires LDCs to pursue transparent fiscal systems or measures, as suggested in the *United Nations Convention against Corruption* (2003), to stop illicit money transfer and return missing assets to each country.²⁸³ Finally, external debts pose an additional challenge for most LDCs.²⁸⁴ Among all LDCs, Myanmar and Sudan experience the most severe impacts of foreign debt.²⁸⁵ Programs like the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative provide substantial debt relief to enable LDCs to

²⁶⁹ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 25.

²⁷⁰ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 27.

²⁷¹ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 26.

²⁷² UN ESCWA, *Assessing Arab Economic Integration - Towards the Arab Customs Union - Summary*, 2015, p. 178.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 178.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 177-178.

²⁷⁶ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 41.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Addis Tax Initiative, *About the Addis Tax Initiative*.

²⁷⁹ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 41.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ UN General Assembly, *Seventieth session, Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (A/RES/70/294)*, 2016, p. 8.

²⁸² UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 41.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42; UN General Assembly, *United Nations Convention against Corruption (A/RES/58/4)*, 2003.

²⁸⁴ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 41.

²⁸⁵ UN ESCWA, *Istanbul Plan of Action for Least Developed Countries in the ESCWA Region, Progress Report of Yemen and Sudan*, 2015, p. 44.

invest in social services and programs that benefit the poorest citizens.²⁸⁶ Full debt relief requires that a Member State commit to combatting poverty through economic policy reforms.²⁸⁷ Both Sudan and Mauritania are eligible to receive HIPC assistance.²⁸⁸

Peace and Stability for LDCs

Multiple crises and other emerging challenges

Economic and financial crises have had severe effects on development efforts in LDCs.²⁸⁹ In addition, many LDCs are impacted by food and fuel crises, natural disasters, or other difficulties posed by climate change.²⁹⁰ The IPoA calls upon LDCs to strengthen resilience to withstand external economic crisis and to increase climate mitigation efforts.²⁹¹ One strategy for climate mitigation is the Green Climate Fund, which was established by the UNFCCC in 2010 to provide grants, loans, or funding guarantees to promote climate adaptation and mitigation.²⁹² The Least Developed Country Fund, established by the UNFCCC in 2001, supports LDCs in preparing and implementing National Adaptation Programs of Action (NAPAs) to address the immediate challenges of climate change in fields such as disaster risk management, ecosystem management, health, and food security.²⁹³ In December 2016, ESCWA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UN Environment Programme, to strengthen cooperation between the organizations to better contribute to the 2030 Agenda in the fields of sustainable production, environmental governance, and capacity building.²⁹⁴ Specific challenges for Arab LDCs include extreme desertification in Mauritania; pollution, deforestation, and land degradation in Sudan; and water scarcity and natural disasters in Yemen.²⁹⁵

While economic shocks and natural disasters are explicitly mentioned in the IPoA, violent conflicts lack proper attention.²⁹⁶ Conflicts negatively impact political and social institutions; ESCWA estimates a loss of more than two percent of GDP for each year of conflict in affected Member States.²⁹⁷ Government revenues are further diminished by the loss of foreign and domestic investment.²⁹⁸ Sudan, for example, continues to experience ongoing violence and two decades of sanctions.²⁹⁹ As a result of ongoing conflict in Yemen, 20.7 million people are in need of humanitarian or protection assistance, and 78% of Yemeni households are in a worse economic situation.³⁰⁰ The Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division of ESCWA aims to reduce the impact of crises and to support transition in post-conflict countries by providing technical assistance to Arab governments on crisis management and institution building.³⁰¹

²⁸⁶ IMF, *Debt Relief Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative*, 2017, p. 1; UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 44.

²⁸⁷ IMF, *Debt Relief Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative*, 2017, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁸⁹ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 37.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Green Climate Fund, *About the fund*; UN General Assembly, *Seventieth session, Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (A/RES/70/294)*, 2016, p. 22.

²⁹³ Global Environmental Facility, *Least Developed Countries Fund*, 2017.

²⁹⁴ UN ESCWA, *ESCWA and UNEP Sign MoU to Sustain Cooperation*, 2017.

²⁹⁵ UNDP, *Synthesis Paper: Governance of Climate Change in Yemen*, 2012, p. 3; UNEP, *State of Environment in Sudan*; UNDP & UNEP, *Mauritania*, 2015.

²⁹⁶ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, pp. 37-41.

²⁹⁷ UN ESCWA, *Report of the twenty-ninth session (ESCWA/29/12/Report)*, 2016, pp. 9-13.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

²⁹⁹ UN-OHRLLS, *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report*, 2016, p. 34.

³⁰⁰ UN OCHA, *Crisis Overview*.

³⁰¹ UN ESCWA, *Governance and Conflict Issues*, 2017.

Human development and good governance

LDCs' greatest assets are their populations.³⁰² The IPoA midterm review also emphasizes the need to achieve gender equality and empowerment to achieve better development outcomes in LDCs.³⁰³ The ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) conducts research on gender equality, evaluates policies, and provides recommendations to governments.³⁰⁴ One successful multi-sector project is the Sudan "Women Portfolio," a 2016 campaign of the Central Bank of Sudan for 75,000 women to finance projects targeting the development of women in rural areas.³⁰⁵ Education, training, and youth development are essential to achieving sustainable development and growth.³⁰⁶ While primary education in many LDCs has improved, enrollment rates at secondary and tertiary levels remain low.³⁰⁷ Besides education, LDCs suffer from health challenges, including weak health systems, limited access to water, and poor sanitation.³⁰⁸ Sudan experiences high rates of child mortality and tuberculosis.³⁰⁹ In Yemen, 362,000 suspected cases of cholera and the daily medical needs of conflict victims overburden the health system.³¹⁰ However, solutions for high-burden health problems need to be country-specific.³¹¹

Conclusion

LDCs are the most vulnerable countries in the world and need special attention from the international community.³¹² The three Arab LDCs face distinct challenges due to structural, historical, and geographical factors.³¹³ Strategies to strengthen these countries includes increasing economic integration and trade in the Arab region, as well as fostering productive capacity through investments in energy supplies and infrastructure.³¹⁴ In addition, the mobilization of financial resources is crucial to support Arab LDCs on their path to graduation.³¹⁵ All three Arab LDCs are extremely vulnerable to climate change; Yemen and Sudan's development is further hindered by violent conflict.³¹⁶ In order to holistically strengthen Arab LDCs, ESCWA and its Member States need to address all of these challenges.

³⁰² UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 28.

³⁰³ UN General Assembly, *Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (A/RES/70/294)*, 2016, p. 18; UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 31.

³⁰⁴ UN ESCWA, *Gender and Women Issues*, 2017.

³⁰⁵ UN-OHRLLS, *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report*, 2016, p. 18.

³⁰⁶ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 28.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-34.

³⁰⁹ UN-OHRLLS, *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report, National Focal Points Meetings of the LDCs on the implementation of the Istanbul Program of Action*, 2016, p. 7; UN-OHRLLS, *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report*, 2016, p. 11.

³¹⁰ WHO, *Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2017*, 2017; WHO, *Yemen cholera situation report no. 4*, 2017, p. 1.

³¹¹ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 31.

³¹² UNCTAD, *Least Developed Countries (LDCs)*.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 16; UN ESCWA, *Assessing Arab Economic Integration - Towards the Arab Customs Union - Summary*, 2015, pp. 13, 177-178.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ UN-OHRLLS, *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*, 2011, p. 37; UN-OHRLLS, *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report*, 2016, p. 34; UN OCHA, *Crisis Overview*.

Further Research

As delegates proceed in their research, there are multiple questions to keep in mind: How can the needs and challenges of each Arab LDC be adequately addressed? How can ESCWA promote cooperation between regional organizations for the benefit of LDCs? How can economic integration among Arab Member States be strengthened? What measures can be adopted to promote productive capacity, agriculture, and food security? How can economic development be improved so that it also achieves human development? How can specific cases of conflict-affected LDCs be addressed?

Annotated Bibliography

African Development Bank. (2012). *Cape Verde: A Success Story*. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Cape%20Verde%20-%20A%20Success%20Story.pdf>

This document describes the success story of Cape Verde, which graduated from the LDC category in 2007. The analysis in this source highlights the importance of effective institution and state building. Good governance, human resource and infrastructure development, and the establishment of strategic partnerships, were crucial to enable Cape Verde's graduation. In chapter three, the analysis includes lessons learned, such as the necessity of political and economic stability, and strengthening good governance. Delegates can use the example of Cape Verde to identify strategies that can be implemented for LDCs in ESCWA.

United Nations, Committee for Development Policy & United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2015). *Handbook on the Least Developed Country Category: Inclusion, Graduation and Special Support Measures (Second Edition)*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/2015cdphandbook.pdf>

The LDC Handbook consists of three chapters which address all information on the LDC category. This includes the history, measurement for inclusion and graduation from the LDC category, as well as tools to identify LDCs. In addition, the report presents a summary of the available international support measures such as preferential market access for LDCs or ODA commitments. In addition, the handbook describes the indicators for the LDC criteria, namely GNI per capita, as well as the human asset index and economic vulnerability index in detail. The handbook is the best source to get a comprehensive overview of criteria, measurements, procedures, methodology, and data sources to understand the LDC categorization.

United Nations, Committee for Development Policy. (2017). *Lessons learned in developing productive capacities from countries graduating and graduated from the LDC category* [Report]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-excerpt-2017-1.pdf>

This document describes three different pathways to graduation from the LDC category. LDCs can exploit resources to enforce rapid economic growth. In addition, they can focus on economic specialization and strengthen good development governance. Finally, LDCs can focus on economic diversification and promote rural development to expand their productive capacity. The document discusses advantages and disadvantages of these pathways. It also highlights the necessity and importance of peace and security for development, stability, and growth. Delegates should assess if one these three strategies are suitable for the Arab LDCs, and consider measures to enable the implementation of the respective pathway.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Policy & Analysis Division. (n.d.). *LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldc-criteria.html>

This website presents the three main criteria which are used by the General Assembly and ECOSOC to review the list of LDCs every three years. Progress in the fields of income, human assets, and economic vulnerability determine a possible graduation from the LDC category. The website summarizes how each criterion is measured, and the composition of all indicators for each of them. For delegates, the website is the best source to get a brief overview of the LDC graduation process, as well as to identify the indicators that can be addressed to strengthen LDCs in the path toward graduation.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2015). *Assessing Arab Economic Integration: Towards the Arab Customs Union - Summary* [Report]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/assessing-arab-economic-integration.pdf>

This 2015 report by ESCWA on Assessing Arab Economic Integration: Towards the Arab Customs Union - Summary examines regional economic integration efforts and provides recommendations for ESCWA Member States on them. The report covers the current state of Arab economic integration, and describes the factors influencing further collaboration, such as energy cooperation, water resources, transportation and infrastructure, trade or financial integration. It provides a detailed overview of economic integration efforts in the Arab region, and suggests recommendations such as: promoting trade, agriculture investment, and fostering industrialization to further strengthen these efforts. Delegates can use this source to consider measures to implement these recommendations.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2016). *Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (A/RES/70/294)* [Resolution]. Adopted without reference to a Main Committee (A/70/L.56). Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/294>

The Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 highlights previous successful measures and achievements regarding the IPoA implementation. The review includes recommendations for further actions to achieve the goals set in the IPoA until 2020. LDCs need to further integrate the IPoA into their national and sectoral development plans to measure progress, identify implementation challenges and gaps, and better coordinate international support. The IPoA review underlines the necessity to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation and the importance of science and technology.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division. (2015). *Istanbul Plan of Action for Least Developed Countries in the ESCWA Region, Progress Report of Yemen and Sudan*. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from:

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/ipoa_working.pdf

This ESCWA report on the implementation of the IPoA is the most recent document on the progress in Yemen and Sudan regarding potential graduation from the LDC category. The report provides an excellent overview of the most important challenges both countries are facing, such as structural vulnerabilities and political instability. It highlights that unstable security situations or socio-economic challenges, including the high youth unemployment rate, greatly aggravate these challenges. The document will offer delegates insights into issues such as political instability, youth unemployment, and weak institutions that need to be addressed in both countries. It provides a good overview of recent development, and a summary of available economic data.

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2011). *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from:

http://www.unohrrls.org/UserFiles/File/A-CONF_219-7%20report%20of%20the%20conference.pdf

This report summarizes the outcomes of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2011, and provides a brief overview of relevant documents, including the IPoA for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020. It provides detailed information of the IPoA priority areas and recommends actions for LDCs and development partners. Delegates should think about the role of ESCWA in supporting the implementation of these actions. The report is crucial to understanding the steps the international community needs to take to provide all LDCs with the necessary support for graduation from the LDC category.

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2016). *Lessons learned from five years of implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries* [Report]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from:

http://www.ipoareview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Lessons_Learned_5years_Implement_IPoA_LDCs_lowres.pdf

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) published a review five years after the adoption of the IPoA in 2016. It reviews the status of implementation for the eight priority areas identified in 2011 to overcome the challenges and graduate from the LDC category. Additionally, the report highlights lessons learned and new challenges, and suggests new initiatives to extend free trade areas to improve intra-regional trade or to address food security by investing in storage facilities. The document provides best practices and pilot projects for Arab LDCs, for example to successfully reduce the energy challenge in Mauritania. Delegates can use this source to deepen their understanding of the eight priority areas for LDCs, and to identify successful projects in other LDCs. This report will also allow them to think about how to implement similar projects in Mauritania, Yemen, and Sudan.

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2016). *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report*. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2016/05/Sudan-Paper-Istanbul-Programme-of-Action-2011-2020-1.pdf>

In 2016, UN-OHRLLS published a midterm review for Sudan, which examines the IPoA implementation progress. The report highlights the progress made for all IPoA priority areas, such as productive capacity, agriculture, trade, human and social development, or health. The report summarizes the activities of Sudan, for example by listing all memorandums of understanding to address productive capacity in the telecommunication and information sector, which is one target for LDCs. It also underlines the difficulties for the country in a post-conflict situation, after two decades of sanctions and the independence of South Sudan. Delegates can use the document to get a detailed overview of all relevant numbers and figures related to the IPoA areas for Sudan, and to identify points for further action.

Bibliography

Addis Tax Initiative. (n.d.). *About the Addis Tax Initiative* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <https://www.addistaxinitiative.net/#slider-1>

African Development Bank. (2012). *Cape Verde: A Success Story*. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Cape%20Verde%20-%20A%20Success%20Story.pdf>

Arab NGO Network for Development. (2017). *Mission and Vision* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://www.annd.org/english/page.php?pageId=1#sthash.q4K37rb9.dpbs>

Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Twenty-first session. (2015). *Paris Agreement*. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

Enhanced Integrated Framework. (n.d.). *Countries* [Website]. Retrieved 3 November 2017 from: <http://www.enhancedif.org/en/countries>

Enhanced Integrated Framework. (n.d.). *Trade Mainstreaming* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://www.enhancedif.org/en/topics/trade-mainstreaming>

European Commission. (2017). *Everything but Arms (EBA)* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/import-and-export-rules/import-into-eu/gsp-rules/everything-but-arms/>

Fan, S. (2015, April 9). How agriculture can improve health and nutrition. *World Economic Forum*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/04/how-agriculture-can-improve-health-and-nutrition/>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2017). *Integrated Production and Pest Management Programme in Africa - Mauritania* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/ippm/projects/mauritania/en/>

Global Environment Facility. (2017). *Least Developed Countries Fund - LDCF* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <https://www.thegef.org/topics/least-developed-countries-fund-ldcf>

Green Climate Fund. (n.d.). *About the Fund* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://www.greenclimate.fund/who-we-are/about-the-fund>

International Conference on Financing for Development. (2002). *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development (A/CONF.198/11)*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/CONF.198/11>

International Monetary Fund. (2017). *Debt Relief Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative* [Factsheet]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://www.imf.org/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2016/08/01/16/11/Debt-Relief-Under-the-Heavily-Indebted-Poor-Countries-Initiative?pdf=1>

Segal, R. (2011). *Food security in the Least Developed Countries*. LDC Watch. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://www.ldcwatch.org/index.php/resources/publications/reports?download=19:food-security-in-the-least-developed-countries>

LDC Watch. (2017). *About LDC Watch* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://www.ldcwatch.org/index.php/about-ldc-watch/introduction>

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. (2016). *The OIC-2025 Programme of Action (OIC/SUM-13/2016/POA-Final)*. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <https://www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=16&refID=5>

Oxley, N. (2016, June 28). Five challenges for Least Developed Countries in the post-2015 era. *International Institute for Environment and Development*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.iied.org/five-challenges-for-least-developed-countries-post-2015-era>

Social Watch. (n.d.). *About us* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://www.socialwatch.org/about>

United Nations, Committee for Development Policy. (n.d.). *Development Assistance related International Support Measures* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017: <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/category/development-assistance-isms/>

United Nations, Committee for Development Policy. (n.d.). *General Support related International Support Measures* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017: <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/category/general-support-isms/>

United Nations, Committee for Development Policy. (n.d.). *Support Measures Portal for Least Developed Countries* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017: <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/learn-more/>

United Nations, Committee on Development Policy. (2017). *Lessons learned in developing productive capacities from countries graduating and graduated from the LDC category* [Report]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-excerpt-2017-1.pdf>

United Nations, Committee for Development Policy & United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2015). *Handbook on the Least Developed Country Category: Inclusion, Graduation and Special Support Measures (Second Edition)*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/2015cdphandbook.pdf>

United Nations, Committee for Development Policy & United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Policy & Analysis Division. (2017). *List of Least Developed Countries (as of June 2017)*. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/l dc_list.pdf

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (n.d.). *About UNCTAD* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/aboutus.aspx>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (n.d.). *Least Developed Countries (LDCs)* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/ALDC/Least%20Developed%20Countries/LDCs.aspx>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (n.d.). *The Least Developed Countries Report* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/ALDC/Least%20Developed%20Countries/The-Least-Developed-Countries-Report.aspx>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (n.d.). *UN recognition of Least Developed Countries (LDC)* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/ALDC/Least%20Developed%20Countries/UN-recognition-of-LDCs.aspx>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2006). *The Least Developed Countries Report 2006: Developing Productive Capacities*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: http://unctad.org/en/Docs/l dc2006_en.pdf

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2015). *UNCTAD Toolbox: Delivering Results* [Report]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/osg2015d6_en.pdf

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2016). *The Least Developed Countries Report 2016 - The path to graduation and beyond: Making the most of the process*. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/l dc2016_en.pdf

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2017). *UNCTAD's input to a concept note on theme 5: "Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for a small scale artisans fishers to marine resources and market."* Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/13516UNCTAD%203%20-Input-Concept%20Note-Theme%205.pdf>

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Policy & Analysis Division. (n.d.). *About Secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy* [Website]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/about-us/secretariat-of-the-committee-for-development-policy.html>

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Policy & Analysis Division. (n.d.). *LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators* [Website]. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/l dc-criteria.html>

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Financing for Development Office. (2015, July 15). *Countries reach historic agreement to generate financing for new sustainable development agenda* [Press Release]. Retrieved 9 August 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/press-release/countries-reach-historic-agreement.html>

United Nations Development Programme & Republic of Yemen, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. (2012). *A Promising sector for Diversified Economy in Yemen: National Agriculture Sector Strategy 2012-2016*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: http://www.ye.undp.org/content/dam/yemen/PovRed/Docs/Yemen_National%20Agriculture%20Sector%20Strategy%202012-2016%20En.pdf

United Nations Development Programme. (2012). *Synthesis Paper: Governance of Climate Change in Yemen* [Report]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/yemen/E&E/Docs/UNDP-YEM-Governance%20of%20Climate%20Change%20in%20Yemen.pdf>

United Nations Development Programme & United Nations Environment Programme, Poverty-Environment Initiative. (2015). *Mauritania* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://www.unpei.org/what-we-do/pei-countries/mauritania>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2015). *Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030* [Report]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/arab-development-outlook-vision-2030-english_0.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2015). *Assessing Arab Economic Integration: Towards the Arab Customs Union - Summary* [Report]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/assessing-arab-economic-integration-summary-english-french.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division. (2015). *Istanbul Plan of Action for Least Developed Countries in the ESCWA Region, Progress Report of Yemen and Sudan*. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/ipoa_working.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2015). *Pathways towards Food Security in the Arab Region: An Assessment of Wheat Availability* [Report]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/e_escwa_sdpd_15_1_e.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016, November 18). *ESCWA and UNEP Sign MoU to Sustain Cooperation* [News Article]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/ESCWA-UNEP-MoU-2016>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016, April 22). *In the Run towards the 3rd Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2nd UN Environment Assembly* [News Article]. Retrieved 22 October 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/news/run-towards-3rd-arab-forum-sustainable-development-and-2nd-un-environment-assembly-0>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Report of the twenty-ninth session (ESCWA/29/12/Report)* [Official Record]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/reports/e_escwa_29_12_report_e.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs)* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/arab-least-developed-countries>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Economic Development and Integration* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/economic-development-integration>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Economic Governance and Planning* [Website]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/economic-governance-and-planning>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Financing for Development* [Website]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/financing-development>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Gender and Women Issues* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/gender-and-women-issues>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Governance and Conflict Issues* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/governance-and-conflict-issues>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region* [Report]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/food-water-security-arab-region-english.pdf>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Trade Integration* [Website]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/trade-integration>

United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.). *State of Environment in Sudan* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/disasters-conflicts/where-we-work/sudan/state-environment-sudan>

United Nations, General Assembly, Twenty-first session. (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/6546). Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: [http://undocs.org/A/RES/2200\(XXI\)](http://undocs.org/A/RES/2200(XXI))

United Nations, General Assembly, Twenty-sixth session. (1971). *Identification of the least developed among the developing countries (A/RES/2768 (XXVI))* [Resolution]. Adopted without reference to a Main Committee. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: [http://undocs.org/A/RES/2768\(XXVI\)](http://undocs.org/A/RES/2768(XXVI))

United Nations, General Assembly, Fifty-sixth session. (2001). *3rd UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/56/227)* [Resolution]. Adopted on the report of the Second Committee (A/56/569). Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/56/227>

United Nations, General Assembly, Fifty-eighth session. (2003). *United Nations Convention against Corruption (A/RES/58/4)*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/58/4>

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-third session. (2008). *Doha Declaration on Financing for Development: outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (A/RES/63/239)*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/63/239>

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-sixth session. (2012). *Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/66/213)* [Resolution]. Adopted on the report of the Second Committee (A/66/443/Add.1). Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/66/213>

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2015). *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/69/313>

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2015). *Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283)*. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/69/283>

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2016). *Establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries (A/RES/71/251)* [Resolution]. Adopted without reference to a Main Committee (A/71/L.52). Retrieved 17 October 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/251>

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2016). *Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (A/RES/70/294)* [Resolution]. Adopted without reference to a Main Committee (A/70/L.56). Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/294>

United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (n.d.). *Crisis Overview* [Website]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <http://www.unocha.org/yemen/about-ocha-yemen>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2011). *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011*. Retrieved 6 August 2017 from: http://www.unohrrls.org/UserFiles/File/A-CONF_219-7%20report%20of%20the%20conference.pdf

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2016). *Lessons learned from five years of implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries* [Report]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: http://www.ipoareview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Lessons_Learned_5years_Implement_IPoA_LDCs_lowres.pdf

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2016). *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report*. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2016/05/Sudan-Paper-Istanbul-Programme-of-Action-2011-2020-1.pdf>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2016). *Midterm Review of the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sudan National Report, National Focal Points Meetings of the LDCs on the implementation of the Istanbul Program of Action*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2016/03/REPORT-SUDAN.pdf>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2016). *Priorities of LDCs in the context of the SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda* [Report]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2016/01/Priorities-of-LDCs-in-the-context-of-the-SDGs-and-the-Post-2015-Development-Agenda-.pdf>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2017). *About LDCs* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/about-ldcs/>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2017). *About UN-OHRLS* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/about-un-ohrrls/>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2017). *Criteria for Identification and Graduation of LDCs* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/about-ldcs/criteria-for-ldcs/>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2017). *Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action – 2011* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/about-ldcs/istanbul-programme-of-action/>

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. (2017). *UN-OHRLS mandate for Least Developed Countries* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://unohrrls.org/about-ldcs/un-ohrrls-mandate/>

United Nations, Regional Commissions New York Office. (n.d.). *What we do* [Website]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/about/the-regional-commissions/what-we-do/>

Wahlén, C. (2014, August 5). LDCs Conference Discusses Building Productive Capacity. *International Institute for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/lDCs-conference-discusses-building-productive-capacity/>

World Health Organization. (2017). *Yemen cholera situation report no. 4*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/20170719_WHO_cholera_SitRep_4_v2.pdf?ua=1

World Health Organization. (2017). *Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2017* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://www.who.int/emergencies/response-plans/2017/yemen/en/>

World Summit on Sustainable Development. (2002). *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.199/20)*. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/CONF.199/20>

World Trade Organization. (2017). *Enhanced Integrated Framework* [Website]. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/teccop_e/if_e.htm

World Trade Organization. (2001). *Towards free market access for least-developed countries* [Background Note]. Retrieved 8 August 2017 from: https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/brief_e/brief03_e.htm

World Trade Organization. (2017). *What we do* [Website]. Retrieved 19 September 2017 from: https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/what_we_do_e.htm

III. Reducing the Occurrence of Gender Based Violence

*“Break the silence. When you witness violence against women and girls, do not sit back. Act.”*³¹⁷

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) are considered by the international community to be impediments to development and a public health crisis.³¹⁸ The World Health Organization (WHO) defines GBV as any act of “violence directed against a person on the basis of gender.”³¹⁹ VAW, the most common form of GBV, is defined by WHO as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”³²⁰ WHO estimates that globally, one in three women will be victims of sexual violence during their life.³²¹ In addition, sexual violence is more severe in areas that are rural, have low-levels of education, or are in conflict, making this issue especially important in western Asia.³²² Conflict and an inability to accurately report the extent of GBV and who the perpetrators are, has led to rates of VAW increasing in the Arab region in 2017.³²³ The majority of the Arab World still does not support gender equality, often citing local customs, religion, and false narratives of women being less capable, as reasons for this opposition.³²⁴ VAW and GBV are not distinctively Arab or Islamic issues, even if gender inequality is deeply rooted in those traditions; yet, it remains the responsibility of all Member States and United Nations (UN) agencies to address this issue.³²⁵

Despite the international community’s understanding of the devastating effects of GBV on individuals and society, there remains little reporting on the issue.³²⁶ This means that researchers and policymakers have only a basic understanding of its effects.³²⁷ Only nine percent of victims in the Arab region have reported the crime, making prevention and justice difficult to achieve.³²⁸ Globally, underreporting and lack of studies that focus specifically on female genital mutilation (FGM), VAW, GBV, or domestic violence have aggravated the issue.³²⁹ Lack of reporting is largely due to institutionalized stigma that blames victims rather than perpetrators for actions of sexual violence.³³⁰ Educating a younger generation about these stigmas and the issues surrounding discrimination against women is critical to eliminating VAW within the Arab region.³³¹ GBV has measurable effects on many areas, including economic growth, human rights, and governance, and therefore has been discussed broadly throughout the international system.³³² In Egypt and Sudan, 87% of women from ages 15-49 have undergone some form of FGM and over 125 million women and girls across 29 countries in the Arab region have been made subject to the practice.³³³ FGM is performed by minority groups, migrants, and majorities alike, meaning it is a regional issue and not just an isolated problem.³³⁴ Conflict in Syria and Iraq has been a significant reason for an increase in GBV, with refugees fleeing conflict reporting high-levels of domestic abuse inside camps.³³⁵ Further, empowering women is important as they can contribute to society with high skilled labor, and therefore provide more opportunities for a

³¹⁷ UN Secretary General’s UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign, *About UNiTE*.

³¹⁸ Kadi, Alarming rise of violence against women in Arab region, *The Arab Weekly*, 2017.

³¹⁹ UN ESCWA, *Gender Based Violence*.

³²⁰ WHO, *Violence against women*.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ Beiter, Rates of Rape and Sexual Violence High in Middle East, *The Media Line*, 2016.

³²⁴ UN-Women, *One-quarter of men in Middle East and North Africa support gender equality*, 2017.

³²⁵ Fisher, The Real Roots of Sexism in the Middle East (It's Not Islam, Race, or 'Hate'), *The Atlantic*, 2012.

³²⁶ Kadi, Alarming rise of violence against women in Arab region, *The Arab Weekly*, 2017.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ UNSD, *The World’s Women*, 2015.

³³⁰ Beiter, Rates of Rape and Sexual Violence High in Middle East, *The Media Line*, 2016.

³³¹ WHO, *Violence against women*.

³³² Mishra, *Combating Gender Based Violence: Achieving Gender Equality in Post 2015*, 2016.

³³³ UN Statistics Division, *The World’s Women*, 2015.

³³⁴ Kadi, Alarming rise of violence against women in Arab region, *The Arab Weekly*, 2017.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

Member State's development.³³⁶ The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has identified reducing VAW as a priority for development in the Arab region, recognizing the challenges that women face.³³⁷ ESCWA works with Member States and other interested parties to end practices such as FGM and state-condoned VAW.³³⁸ Not only has reduction in VAW resulted in immediate economic and social development by empowering women to be community leaders, but the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has found that when women are involved in peace agreements, the likelihood of these lasting longer can be up to 35% higher.³³⁹

International and Regional Framework

Gender equality has long been a focus of the international system, with the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) first mentioning men and women's parity as a necessity in the preamble.³⁴⁰ The *Charter of the United Nations* goes on to state that there are no restrictions in the roles that men and women can serve within the organization, affirming the importance of gender equality globally.³⁴¹ The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) (UDHR) further affirms the importance of gender equality by stating that all persons have a legitimate claim to security of person, and freedom from persecution or violence.³⁴² Other key documents that address gender equality include the *Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), which were adopted by the General Assembly in 1967 and 1979 respectively.³⁴³ CEDAW, ratified by all ESCWA Member States except for Sudan, provided one of the first internationally agreed-upon definitions of GBV and upholds the reproductive rights of women.³⁴⁴ In 1974 and 1982 respectively, the General Assembly adopted the *Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict* and the *Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation*, which further establish a priority to combat VAW for the international community.³⁴⁵

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) began to discuss action toward VAW as a part of its approach to gender inequality in 1990, noting that it was an issue that crossed class, racial, and cultural lines in several resolutions.³⁴⁶ This included the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, adopted in 1993, which states that all previous documents concerning human rights, including the UDHR, applied equally to men and women.³⁴⁷ It also updated the definition of GBV to include any sort of sexual, physical, or mental harm committed or condoned by the family, public, or government.³⁴⁸ This declaration later led to the creation of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, who is tasked with researching and studying the effects of GBV to help inform international policy for its eradication.³⁴⁹

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, the UN adopted the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, (1995) reinforcing previous assessments from the UDHR, CEDAW, and other frameworks about the importance of gender equality.³⁵⁰ Through this declaration, the UN committed to ensuring the full economic and social

³³⁶ *Preventing Gender-Based Violence will Help Women, Girls and Countries Thrive*, World Bank, 2017.

³³⁷ UN ESCWA, *Gender and Women Issues*.

³³⁸ UN ESCWA, *Gender Based Violence*.

³³⁹ UN-Women, "*Women in leadership, women empowered, and women at the helm make a difference*" — Lakshmi Puri," 2016.

³⁴⁰ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Art. 8.

³⁴² UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

³⁴³ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/2263 (XXII))*, 1967; UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

³⁴⁴ UN-Women, *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*.

³⁴⁵ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (A/RES/3318 (XXIX))*, 1974; UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation (A/RES/37/63)*, 1982.

³⁴⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Resolutions and Decisions of the Economic and Social Council (E/1990/90)*, 1990.

³⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104)*, 1993.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ UNCHR, *Further Promotion And Encouragement Of Human Rights And Fundamental Freedoms, Including The Question Of The Programme And Methods Of Work Of The Commission (E/CN.4/1994/45)*, 1993.

³⁵⁰ UN Fourth Conference on women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

empowerment of women in all Member States, including developing countries.³⁵¹ The Beijing Declaration states that humanitarian law is important in eliminating GBV and recognizes the importance of including men in this process, as they are the most frequent perpetrators of GBV.³⁵² Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Declaration during both its fifteen and twenty-year review.³⁵³ The Beijing Declaration also validated much of the *Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict*, by recognizing that GBV in conflict zones must be addressed in order to handle the issue as a whole.³⁵⁴

The UN Security Council highlighted the importance of women in conflict and post-conflict with resolution 1325 (2000) on “Women and Peace and Security,” which addresses the need to involve more women at the decision-making level in conflict.³⁵⁵ The Security Council was compelled to adopt this resolution due to the changing nature of conflict at the end of the millennium.³⁵⁶ Further, the Security Council recognized a need to include women in peace processes, as they are often disproportionately affected by violent conflict.³⁵⁷ Resolution 1325 also stresses the need to use a gendered lens in rebuilding, and when providing relief measures to post-conflict Member States.³⁵⁸

The UN General Assembly has focused on VAW prior to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), having adopted six resolutions on the “Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women” from 2006 to 2012.³⁵⁹ With each resolution, the General Assembly welcomed reports of the Secretary-General on GBV, which affirmed that Member States had the ultimate responsibility for prevention of GBV, and that measures needed to be taken in education to adequately address the issue.³⁶⁰ The General Assembly affirmed education and gender equality as key human rights in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), and the 17 SDGs, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which has a target of eliminating all forms of VAW, including sex trafficking.³⁶¹ It is important to remember that specific actions can influence multiple SDGs; for example: lifting women out of poverty (SDG 1) can be important for reducing GBV, increasing gender equality (SDG 5), and positively impacting other SDGs.³⁶²

In 2016, ESCWA’s Committee on Women adopted the *Muscat Declaration*, which supports the role of gender in the SDGs and recommits Member States toward achieving them.³⁶³ The declaration places a greater focus on Member States to harmonize national legislation with international frameworks such as CEDAW, in order to eliminate discrimination between men and women.³⁶⁴ The Committee on Women expressed strongly in their recommendations that international frameworks, including CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration, were already in place, and that implementation remained the most vital part of addressing GBV.³⁶⁵ The *Muscat Declaration* also stressed the importance of ESCWA’s role in providing adequate support to create national mechanisms capable of eliminating VAW and discrimination against women in all its forms.³⁶⁶

³⁵¹ UN Fourth Conference on women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ UN CSW, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3)*, 2015.

³⁵⁴ UN Fourth Conference on women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

³⁵⁵ UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325 (2000))*, 2000.

³⁵⁶ USIP, *What is U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 and Why is it so Critical Today?*.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ UN General Assembly, *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/67/144)*, 2012.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ UN ESCWA, Committee on Women, *Report of the Committee on Women on its seventh session (E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/IG.1/7/Report)*, 2016.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Role of the International System

While the General Assembly and Security Council are responsible for much of the framework concerning VAW, it is often the responsibility of other UN agencies to help implement specific provisions.³⁶⁷ In 1996, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/166 creating the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UN Trust Fund) and entrusted its stewardship to UN-Women.³⁶⁸ UN-Women uses the UN Trust Fund to collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to reduce VAW through improved access to legal services and strengthening the application of actions and policies to promote gender equality.³⁶⁹ In 2013, the UN Trust Fund provided grants to 77 programs in 70 Member States, which were administered by both governments and NGOs.³⁷⁰ The Samoa Victim Support Group and the “He for She” campaign were both awarded grants, which were used to educate a younger generation about GBV and to influence legislation designed to help victims of VAW.³⁷¹ UN-Women also collaborates across the UN system: it is actively involved as a member of the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and works closely with the UN Secretary-General’s UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, both of which work to promote action and awareness by the entire global community to address GBV.³⁷²

ESCWA views GBV and VAW as a high priority because of their prevalence in the region, particularly in conflict zones.³⁷³ The ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) is tasked with reporting on VAW in the Arab region, as well as with recommending solutions to the body at large.³⁷⁴ ESCWA, under the recommendation of the ECW, has adopted a broad definition of VAW to include forced marriage, sexual harassment, and any act of GBV condoned by the state.³⁷⁵ Despite stating that sexual violence allowed by states is a crime against women, ESCWA has found that the Arab region still has many laws that have negative impacts on women.³⁷⁶ ESCWA has stressed the importance of changing these laws in the *Muscat Declaration* and provides advisory services to this end, but has not seen significant progress thus far.³⁷⁷ Local agencies often make GBV less of a priority and do not cooperate or provide assistance to pertinent Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs, which are left without adequate resources.³⁷⁸

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is committed to empowering women in communities as part of its *Agenda for Humanity* (2016).³⁷⁹ The agenda recognizes that the elimination of VAW will be possible by reducing discrimination against women and girls in social, political, and economic settings.³⁸⁰ Discrimination is often times deeply embedded into traditions, even though OIC has stated that there is no basis for GBV in Islam, and that this assumption must be disavowed strongly by governments and community leaders.³⁸¹ UN-Women has supported OIC’s efforts to place women in leadership positions as a way to create long-lasting and sustainable peace agreements throughout the region by offering a gendered perspective.³⁸²

The League of Arab States (LAS) contributes to the regional coordination of Arab West Asian and North African Member States.³⁸³ Further, much of LAS’ membership overlaps with ESCWA.³⁸⁴ In 2015, LAS released its Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security, in collaboration with UN-Women.³⁸⁵ LAS has worked closely with the

³⁶⁷ Mishra, *Combating Gender Based Violence: Achieving Gender Equality in Post 2015*, 2016.

³⁶⁸ UN-Women, *UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women*.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Mishra, *Combating Gender Based Violence: Achieving Gender Equality in Post 2015*, 2016.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² UN Secretary General’s UNiTE to End Violence Against Women, *About UNiTE*; UN Action, *What Is Un Action?*.

³⁷³ UN ESCWA, *Gender Based Violence*.

³⁷⁴ UN ESCWA, *Gender and Women Issues*.

³⁷⁵ UN ESCWA, *Gender Based Violence*.

³⁷⁶ UN ESCWA, *Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region (Beijing +20)*, 2016.

³⁷⁷ UN ESCWA, Committee on Women, *Report of the Committee on Women on its seventh session (E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/IG.1/7/Report)*, 2016.

³⁷⁸ UN ESCWA, *Women, Peace and Security*, 2017.

³⁷⁹ OIC, *Alignment with Core Commitments (30)*, 2016.

³⁸⁰ *ILO condemns gender-based violence*, Ghana Web, 2013.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² UN-Women, “*Women in leadership, women empowered, and women at the helm make a difference*” — Lakshmi Puri,” 2016.

³⁸³ UN-Women, *Arab League Presents Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security*, 2015.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries in creating its Regional Action Plan.³⁸⁶ The action plan focuses primarily on women in conflict, noting especially that the Syrian refugee crisis has left women particularly vulnerable, meaning that Member States must make this a higher priority and do a better job ensuring security of women living as refugees within their borders.³⁸⁷ UN-Women praised the plan as a significant step forward in gender equality, but noted that policy should not be confused with action, and that implementation of policy remained equally important.³⁸⁸ By continuing to ensure government leadership positions are accessible to women, and by placing greater emphasis on GBV in the region, the Coalition of Women MPs and LAS see potential for a Convention to Combat Violence Against Women in the Arab Region as a framework in the future.³⁸⁹

Lack of Reporting on GBV

Although WHO, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations have estimates on the rate of GBV and its effects, significant gaps in reporting remain.³⁹⁰ While some of this is due to outdated survey methods, much of this lack of information is due to stigmas or fear of retaliation that either make women not report their abusers or realize that a crime is taking place.³⁹¹ Women often times forgo using the legal system over a belief that it will only work against them.³⁹² In cases of rape, national law can sometimes force the perpetrator and victim to marry, potentially causing more sexual violence.³⁹³ This lack of reporting causes two significant issues, the first being that it prevents policymakers from understanding the issue to its fullest extent, therefore making it difficult to implement targeted strategies to prevent GBV.³⁹⁴ The second is that existing institutions designed to help victims of GBV on an individual basis are hindered in their ability to do so because they do not know who these victims are.³⁹⁵ The *Muscat Declaration* mentions the importance of making statistics readily available but did not provide in-depth plans or strategies for doing so.³⁹⁶ Developing standards for reporting that are feasible and can be administered effectively remains an important first step for reporting GBV.³⁹⁷ One possible solution to this is having women interview victims of VAW, creating a more comfortable setting to discuss the issue, and creating a higher likelihood of full reporting.³⁹⁸ This has not been widely integrated in the international community, however, research has found that individuals were more willing to discuss their experiences with someone of the same sex.³⁹⁹

Studying the Cost of VAW

To this day, there has been very little data collected on the economic costs of GBV throughout the world; even so, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated that a single act of VAW is equivalent to \$50,000 to \$90,000 lost for a woman.⁴⁰⁰ The global cost of VAW is estimated to be in the range of \$42 billion annually, although reporting from many Member States is still missing or insufficient, including ESCWA Member States.⁴⁰¹ In order to influence policymakers to legislate against VAW, ESCWA sees value in studying the

³⁸⁶ “*The Coalition launches its regional conference*” toward a Convention to Combat Violence Against Women in the Arab region, Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries, 2016.

³⁸⁷ UN-Women, *Arab League Presents Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security*, 2015.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *The Coalition launches its regional conference*” toward a Convention to Combat Violence Against Women in the Arab region, Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries, 2016.

³⁹⁰ Farouk, *Violence against women: A statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them*, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, 2005.

³⁹¹ O’Connor, Data holds key to tackling violence against women, *The Irish Times*, 2017.

³⁹² Beiter, Rates of Rape and Sexual Violence High in Middle East, *The Media Line*, 2016.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ O’Connor, Data holds key to tackling violence against women, *The Irish Times*, 2017.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ UN ESCWA, Committee on Women, *Report of the Committee on Women on its seventh session (E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/IG.1/7/Report)*, 2016.

³⁹⁷ EIGE, *Data Collection on Violence Against Women*.

³⁹⁸ Farouk, *Violence against women: A statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them*, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, 2005.

³⁹⁹ Harries, *What's sex got to do with it? When a woman asks questions*, 2015.

⁴⁰⁰ OECD, *The economic cost of violence against women: Council of Women World Leaders high-level discussion at UN General Assembly, Remarks by Angel Gurría, Secretary-General, OECD*, 2016.

⁴⁰¹ Anstey, *The Price of Violence Against Women and Girls*, BBC, 2013.

economic impacts of GBV.⁴⁰² At its January 2017 meeting, ESCWA and CSO representatives met to discuss the status of Arab women, and determined that it would be necessary to place special emphasis on analyzing the economic impact of VAW.⁴⁰³ In order to support this initiative, ESCWA decided to include this metric within the next Status of Arab Women report, which it publishes periodically.⁴⁰⁴ The World Bank has taken particular interest in GBV, recognizing that most studies on the cost of VAW have focused heavily on developed countries and represent just six percent of the total world population.⁴⁰⁵ The World Bank has invested heavily in programs that are designed to improve economies in the Arab region, which also address VAW and gather information about its associated costs.⁴⁰⁶ Egypt is the only Arab Member State to report on this thus far, having estimated that VAW costs the country \$11.8 billion annually in economic development.⁴⁰⁷ ESCWA intends to prioritize studying the economic effects of VAW in the future, something that can be aided by gathering more information from its Member States.⁴⁰⁸

Education and GBV in Schools

Education is one of the most commonly proposed methods for eliminating acts of GBV and VAW.⁴⁰⁹ Discriminative social norms and practices that are taught in schools are then carried on to the larger community and reinforced generationally, making the cycle of discrimination more engrained and difficult to break.⁴¹⁰ School-related GBV (SRGBV) is violence directed at an individual because of their gender, which prevents them from attending academic institutions.⁴¹¹ SRGBV damages academic achievement and furthers the belief that women are not as smart or capable as men, contributing to inequality.⁴¹² The threat of SRGBV prevents women from attending school, which can lead to many women having a higher likelihood of being assaulted than becoming literate, and greatly diminishes the development of a state, both socially and economically.⁴¹³ NGOs such as Save the Children have found that by engaging in dialogue and sharing best practices with education ministries and communities, they are better able to ensure stigmas are not reinforced in schools.⁴¹⁴ Doing so makes schools safer for young girls and therefore makes them more likely to attend regularly.⁴¹⁵ In addition, the physical construction of a school can be more hospitable by having proper facilities to accommodate both men and women, including separate and fully equipped restrooms.⁴¹⁶

ESCWA also supports gender mainstreaming, a process which ensures gender is considered in policy-making.⁴¹⁷ Gender mainstreaming allows education policymakers to view potential impacts of legislation from the viewpoints of both men and women.⁴¹⁸ In the Arab region, it has been found that teaching about reproductive health can be a key factor in reducing instances of FGM, and in eliminating gender stereotypes.⁴¹⁹ However, there remains a lack of adequate training for teachers, technologies, and an overall lack of political will within communities to make these changes.⁴²⁰ A 2017 study by UN-Women found that a growing number of men (currently 25%) in the Arab region supported gender equality and opposed VAW, citing better education as one of the main reasons for the recent

⁴⁰² UN ESCWA, *Costing Violence against Women*, 2017.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Caspani, *The hidden cost of violence against women*, *World Economic Forum*, 2014.

⁴⁰⁶ *Preventing Gender-Based Violence will Help Women, Girls and Countries Thrive*, World Bank, 2017.

⁴⁰⁷ Kadi, *Alarming rise of violence against women in Arab region*, *The Arab Weekly*, 2017.

⁴⁰⁸ UN ESCWA, *Costing Violence against Women*, 2017.

⁴⁰⁹ UNESCO, *Gender-based violence (GBV)*.

⁴¹⁰ Global Women's Institute, *School-Based Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls*, 2012.; UNESCO, *Gender-based violence (GBV)*.

⁴¹¹ Leach, *School-related Gender-based Violence*, 2014.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Parkes, *Gender-based Violence in Education*, 2015.

⁴¹⁴ Global Women's Institute, *School-Based Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls*, 2012.

⁴¹⁵ Sida, *Gender-Based Violence and Education*, 2015.

⁴¹⁶ Mlama, *Gender Responsive Pedagogy*, 2005.

⁴¹⁷ UN ESCWA, *Gender Mainstreaming and National Institutions*.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Bott, *Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in middle and low-income countries: a global review and analysis*, 2005.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

upward trend.⁴²¹ Further, men who were brought up with mothers who worked outside the home, and who had fathers who conveyed the importance of respect toward women, were more likely to be favorable to gender equality, suggesting that education can have a generational impact.⁴²²

Many initiatives seek to eliminate GBV by focusing on the role of education of young men, however, there is equal importance in working with women to help eliminate stigmas through education.⁴²³ Stigmas regarding sex and discrimination can at times be perpetuated by women, as 52% of women in the Arab region believe that domestic violence is often justified in some way.⁴²⁴ Allowing women the same access to education as men can help eliminate some of these stigmas.⁴²⁵ Access to education also allows women to become more economically involved in the community, as education prepares women for the workforce by giving them the ability to become professionals, educators, or community leaders, thus contributing to the economic prosperity of the entire society.⁴²⁶

Conclusion

GBV and VAW have devastating effects on the social and economic development of a region, and Western Asia is not an exception.⁴²⁷ Women remain at great risk of physical, emotional, and sexual violence, making this a high priority for ESCWA, despite the challenges posed by conservative social norms and policies.⁴²⁸ In the Arab region, women are usually not in positions of power, which furthers discriminatory policies and stigmas that lead to VAW.⁴²⁹ While some NGOs and UN agencies have information on the broad effects of GBV, there remains a lack of accurate reporting on an individual basis, which prevents a full grasp of the problem, making it more difficult to address.⁴³⁰ Much of this is because of fear that someone who reports will be harassed or physically harmed, in addition to not always understanding what constitutes an act of GBV.⁴³¹ While the UN has specific definitions for GBV and VAW, many individuals in the Arab region still do not have a unified understanding of it, regardless of gender, making this issue difficult to discuss.⁴³² Further, many women believe that there are times when domestic abuse or sexual violence are acceptable, which reinforces a society that condones GBV.⁴³³ One way to effectively communicate the importance of reducing VAW is to discuss the economic impacts of GBV.⁴³⁴ Likewise, prevention will require education on GBV, as well as encouraging the placement of more women in positions of power to help break the cycle of stigma.⁴³⁵ Frameworks like CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and the *Muscat Declaration* can help guide ESCWA in eliminating discrimination and aid the Arab region's development.⁴³⁶

Further Research

In attempting to address GBV and VAW, delegates should consider the following: How can ESCWA support Member States in the implementation of international frameworks such as CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration? What can be done to harmonize national action plans with international frameworks on gender equality, as recommended by the *Muscat Declaration*? How can ESCWA support the implementation of other recommendations from the *Muscat Declaration*? What is the role of ESCWA in ensuring that women are allowed in positions of authority? How can ESCWA make research readily available to Member States and communicate the importance of eliminating GBV and VAW to the entire region? How can ESCWA improve upon and contribute to the research

⁴²¹ UN-Women, *One-quarter of men in Middle East and North Africa support gender equality*, 2017.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ Parkes, *Gender-based Violence in Education*, 2015.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ UN ESCWA, *Gender Based Violence*.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ Bott, *Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in middle and low-income countries: a global review and analysis*, 2005.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ Parkes, *Gender-based Violence in Education*, 2015.

⁴³⁴ Anstey, *The Price of Violence Against Women and Girls*, BBC, 2013.

⁴³⁵ UN-Women, *One-quarter of men in Middle East and North Africa support gender equality*, 2017.

⁴³⁶ UN ESCWA, *Gender Based Violence*.

being conducted in order to properly address GBV? To what degree should the international community pursue research on the economic costs of GBV?

Annotated Bibliography

Leach, F., et al. (2014). *School-related Gender-based Violence*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/HIV-AIDS/pdf/SRGBV_UNESCO_Global_ReviewJan2014.pdf

This report was developed for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and looks at SRGBV as a reason for continued stigmas, discrimination, and VAW. In addition to reviewing these issues, it provides recommendations, including multi-country comparative studies and more thorough processes for analyzing the implementation of anti-SRGBV policies. The report finds that gender mainstreaming in schools is a key component to providing realistic solutions in addressing GBV. Delegates can use this document to better understand SRGBV and how ESCWA might be able to address this issue.

Mishra, A. (2016). Combating Gender Based Violence: Achieving Gender Equality in Post 2015. *Research and Reviews: Journal of Social Sciences*, 2 (2): 5-7. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.rroij.com/open-access/combating-gender-based-violence-achieving-gender-equality-in-post-2015-.pdf>

This report analyzes the effects and causes of rape, sexual assault, and other physical threats women face in an urban environment, and how the 2030 Agenda can address these issues. It also describes what must still be done to improve reporting, and how international agencies can improve their research methods on this topic. It discusses the role of the international system and outlines what steps still need to be taken to address VAW. This source is useful for delegates to understand what frameworks have been adopted to address GBV, and how the international community hopes to address the issue in the future.

Parkes, J. (2015). *Gender-based Violence in Education*. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002323/232399e.pdf>

This article discusses SRGBV as an issue that affects women and girls, and their ability to use facilities such as restrooms in school buildings. It also analyzes some of the threats and logistical challenges that women face at school and how these can prevent women from attending. It provides statistics that help fully understand SRGBV, and places this issue in perspective within the wider issue of VAW. Delegates can use this source to gain a proper understanding of the issues presented by SRGBV in the Arab Region.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (n.d.) *Gender Based Violence* [Website]. Retrieved 18 July 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/gender-based-violence>

In this website, ESCWA defines GBV as a priority in the Arab region because of the great social and economic costs associated with it. In addition, the website defines VAW in a broad setting and cites pertinent frameworks including CEDAW, The Beijing Platform for Action, and UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) to do so. It also highlights that Member States must take a leading role in addressing this issue, and demonstrates some ways in which they have already done so, including establishing the Centre for Women. This resource is valuable for delegates who seek a primary understanding of ESCWA's core principles on GBV and what key international documents shape them.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Against Winds and Tides: A Review of the Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region (Beijing +20)* [Report]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/3>

This report provides a recent look at how gender equality has been implemented in the Arab region and what issues still need to be addressed. Some of the challenges discussed include: ensuring education during times of conflict and displacement, and ensuring women's reproductive rights. It explains what ESCWA identifies as the causes of these issues, and how it will address them within Member States. Delegates should use this as a document that informs ESCWA's work, and can help them identify themes to discuss in committee, including the situation of women during times of conflict and GBV as priority for the commission.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Committee on Women. (2016). *Report of the Committee on Women on its seventh session (E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/IG.1/7/Report)*. Retrieved 18 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/IG.1/7/Report>

This document from ESCWA's Committee on Women is also referred to as the Muscat Declaration, which states that women should have equal legal protection within Member States. In addition, it analyzes the implementation of recommendations that were made at the previous sessions, including the Kuwait Declaration. It emphasizes the need for better reporting on GBV as well as gender mainstreaming by all Member States in the Arab region. This resource can be used by delegates to understand what the priorities of ESCWA are and how it seeks to implement the Muscat Declaration.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2017, May 22). *One-quarter of men in Middle East and North Africa support gender equality*. [News Article]. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/5/news-one-quarter-of-men-in-mena-support-gender-equality>

This news article from UN-Women depicts gender equality in the Arab region as not widely supported, but points that there has been a steadily increase in its popularity. It analyzes factors that can affect the way the issue is perceived and what can be done to make gender equality more widely accepted. Further, this article discusses views on gender equality as a generational difference, expressing that it will become more accepted over time as new generations begin to take a leading role in society. Delegates will find this source helpful to see that while gender equality is not fully supported in the region, it is changing in a positive direction.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-seventh session. (2012). *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/67/144)* [Resolution]. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/67/450 and Corr.1). Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/67/144>

The resolution on "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women" was adopted in 2012 following several resolutions by the same name. It recalls prior history, and affirms already existing frameworks such as CEDAW. The resolution outlines what additional efforts the UN needs to make to combat VAW. It further proclaims that Member States have the responsibility to condemn GBV and promote human rights. Delegates will find this source useful to understand what frameworks and initiatives the UN General Assembly has found valuable in reducing GBV and where the majority of the responsibility still remains.

United Nations Statistics Division. (2015). *The World's Women* [Report]. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_report.pdf

This report from the UN Statistics Division highlights the remaining gaps in studying violence against women, notably that there is still insufficient data reported from most Member States on this issue, although there has been an increase of information in the past two decades. It shows that women are most susceptible to GBV while in their adolescence and that VAW occurs most often in developing countries. Delegates can use this document to understand the importance of data collection and how it can impede progress on GBV by making it difficult to understand which programs will effectively address the issue.

United States Institute for Peace. (n.d.). *What is U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 and Why is it so Critical Today?*. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is a landmark resolution concerning women and their role in peace and security that still influences policy on GBV and the international community today. This article looks at how the resolution is implemented across the world and in the Arab region specifically, and what the results of this implementation have been. It finds that while resolution 1325 is still critical, the world has changed since its adoption, so new Security Council action may be necessary for the post-2015 agenda. Delegates can use this document to understand one of the foundational documents that discusses GBV and VAW, and how the Arab region can use it in the future.

Bibliography

- Anstey, C. (2013, March 8). Viewpoint: The price of violence against women and girls. *BBC*. Retrieved 24 August 2017 from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-21696469>
- Bar'el, Z. (2015, December 1). Arab Women Breaking Silence on Domestic Violence. *Haaretz*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-1.689336>
- Beiter, K. (2016, November 27). Rates of Rape and Sexual Violence High in Middle East. *The Media Line*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://www.themedialine.org/featured/rates-rape-sexual-violence-high-middle-east/>
- Bott, S., et al. (2005). *Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in middle and low-income countries: a global review and analysis*. World Bank. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/8210/wps3618.txt>
- Caspani, M. (2014, December 5). The hidden cost of violence against women. *World Economic Forum*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2014/12/the-hidden-cost-of-violence-against-women/>
- Charter of the United Nations*. (1945). Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>
- European Institute for Gender Equality. (2017) *Data Collection on Violence Against Women* [Website]. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/data-collection>
- Farouk, S. (2005). *Violence against women: A statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them*. Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA). Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-stat-2005/docs/expert-papers/Farouk.pdf>
- Fisher, M. (2012, April 25). The Real Roots of Sexism in the Middle East (It's Not Islam, Race, or 'Hate'). *The Atlantic*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/the-real-roots-of-sexism-in-the-middle-east-its-not-islam-race-or-hate/256362/>
- García-Moreno, C., & A. Riecher-Rössler. (2013). *Violence against Women and Mental Health*. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <https://www.karger.com/Article/Abstract/342011>
- Global Women's Institute. (2012). *School-Based Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/files/FINAL%20EDUCATION%20BRIEF.pdf>
- Harries, B. (2015). What's sex got to do with it? When a woman asks questions. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 59: 48-57.
- ILO condemns gender-based violence*. (2013, March 13). Ghana Web. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/diaspora/ILO-condemns-gender-based-violence-267675>
- Kadi, S. (2017, January 8). Alarming rise of violence against women in Arab region. *The Arab Weekly*. Retrieved 18 July 2017 from: <http://www.thearabweekly.com/Society/7494/Alarming-rise-of-violence-against-women-in-Arab-region>
- Leach, F., et al. (2014). *School-related Gender-based Violence*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/HIV-AIDS/pdf/SRGBV_UNESCO_Global_ReviewJan2014.pdf

Mishra, A. (2016). Combating Gender Based Violence: Achieving Gender Equality in Post 2015. *Research and Reviews: Journal of Social Sciences*, 2 (2): 5-7. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.rroij.com/open-access/combating-gender-based-violence-achieving-gender-equality-in-post-2015-.pdf>

Mlama, P., et al. (2005). *Gender Responsive Pedagogy: A Teacher's Handbook*. Forum for African Women Educationalists. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: http://www.ungei.org/files/FAWE_GRP_ENGLISH_VERSION.pdf

O'Connor, O. (2017, April 24). Data holds key to tackling violence against women. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/data-holds-key-to-tackling-violence-against-women-1.3058508>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2017). *Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences* [Website]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2016, September 21). *The economic cost of violence against women: Council of Women World Leaders high-level discussion at UN General Assembly, Remarks by Angel Gurría, Secretary-General, OECD*. Retrieved 24 August 2017 from: <http://www.oecd.org/about/secretary-general/the-economic-cost-of-violence-against-women.htm>

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. (2016). *Alignment with Core Commitments (30)* [Website]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/stakeholder/233>

Parkes, J. (2015). *Gender-based Violence in Education*. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002323/232399e.pdf>

Preventing Gender-Based Violence will Help Women, Girls and Countries Thrive. (2017, May 18). World Bank. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/05/18/preventing-gender-based-violence-help-women-girls-countries-thrive>

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. (2015). *Gender-Based Violence and Education*. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/genderbased-violence-and-education.pdf>

"The Coalition launches its regional conference" toward a Convention to Combat Violence Against Women in the Arab region. (2016, December 1). Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://cvaw-arabcoalition.org/en/the-coalition-launches-its-regional-conferencetoward-a-convention-to-combat-violence-against-women-in-the-arab-region/>

United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. (n.d.). *Stop Rape Now* [Website]. Retrieved 21 July 2017 from: <http://www.stoprapenow.org/>

United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, Fiftieth Session. (1993). *Further Promotion And Encouragement Of Human Rights And Fundamental Freedoms, Including The Question Of The Programme And Methods Of Work Of The Commission (E/CN.4/1994/45)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/E/CN.4/1994/45>

United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women, Fifty-Ninth Session. (2014). *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly* [Report]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <http://www.undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2015/3>

United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *Goal 5 targets* [Website]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-5-gender-equality/targets/>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2016). *Against Winds and Tides: A Review of the Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region (Beijing +20)* [Report]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/3>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Seventh Session. (2016). *Report of the Committee on Women on its seventh session (E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/IG.1/7/Report)*. Retrieved 18 July 2017 from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/report_7th_session_-_final_css_en.pdf

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017, February 2). *Costing Violence Against Women* [News Article]. Retrieved 19 July 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/news/costing-violence-against-women>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Gender and Women Issues* [Website]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/gender-and-women-issues>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Gender Based Violence* [Website]. Retrieved 18 July 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/gender-based-violence>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Gender Mainstreaming* [Website]. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/gender-mainstreaming-and-national-institutions>

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2017). *Women, Peace and Security* [Report]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/e/escwa/ecw/2017/1>

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (1990). *Resolutions and Decisions of the Economic and Social Council (E/1990/90)* [Official Record]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/e/1990/90>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2017). *Gender-based violence* [Website]. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/gender-and-education/gender-based-violence-gbv>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (n.d.). *A Brief History of the CSW* [Website]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (n.d.). *Focusing on prevention to stop the violence* [Website]. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/prevention>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (n.d.). *UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women* [Website]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/trust-funds/un-trust-fund-to-end-violence-against-women>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2009). *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* [Website]. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2015, October 13). *Arab League Presents Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security* [News Article]. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: <http://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/10/arab-league-presents-regional-action-plan>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2016, March 18). *“Women in leadership, women empowered, and women at the helm make a difference” — Lakshmi Puri* [Speech]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/3/lakshmi-puri-speech-at-the-promotion-of-women-in-the-oic-region-event>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2017, May 22). *One-quarter of men in Middle East and North Africa support gender equality* [News Article]. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/5/news-one-quarter-of-men-in-mena-support-gender-equality>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women & United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2013). *Combating domestic violence against women and girls: Policies to empower women in the Arab region* [Report]. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/all/combating-domestic-violence-against-women-and-girls>

United Nations, Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Retrieved 18 July 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

United Nations, General Assembly, Third session. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

United Nations, General Assembly, Twenty-second session. (1967). *Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/2263 (XXII))*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/6880). Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: [http://undocs.org/A/RES/2263\(XXII\)](http://undocs.org/A/RES/2263(XXII))

United Nations, General Assembly, Twenty-ninth session. (1974). *Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (A/RES/3318 (XXIX))*. Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: [http://undocs.org/A/RES/3318\(XXIX\)](http://undocs.org/A/RES/3318(XXIX))

United Nations, General Assembly, Thirty-fourth session. (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/34/830). Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/34/180>

United Nations, General Assembly, Thirty-seventh session. (1982). *Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation (A/RES/37/63)*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/37/676). Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/37/63>

United Nations, General Assembly, Forty-eighth session. (1993). *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104)*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/48/629). Retrieved 16 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/48/104>

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-seventh session. (2012). *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/67/144)* [Resolution]. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/67/450 and Corr.1). Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/67/144>

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

United Nations Girls Education Initiative et al. (2017). *Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans* [Report]. Retrieved 23 August 2017 from: http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/GPE_Guidance_for_Gender-Responsive_ESPs_Final.pdf

United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sexual Violence in Conflict. (2017). *About the Office* [Website]. Retrieved 21 July 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/about-us/about-the-office/>

United Nations, Security Council, 4213th Meeting. (2000). *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325 (2000))* [Resolution]. Retrieved 19 July 2017 from: [http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000))

United Nations Statistics Division. (2015). *The World's Women* [Report]. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_report.pdf

United Nations Secretary General's UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign. (n.d.). *About UNiTE* [Website]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/about.shtml>

World Health Organization. (2016). *Violence against women* [Website]. Retrieved 21 August 2017 from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

United States Institute for Peace. (n.d.). *What is U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 and Why is it so Critical Today?*. Retrieved 20 August 2017 from: https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325