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**Draft regional programme document for Arab States
(2018-2021)**

Contents

| <i>Chapter</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| I. Programme rationale | 2 |
| II. Programme priorities and partnerships..... | 5 |
| III. Programme and risk management | 10 |
| IV. Monitoring and evaluation..... | 11 |
| Annex | |
| Results and resources framework for the regional programme for Arab States (2018-2021) | 12 |



I. Programme rationale

1. World leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and related agreements to end poverty and ‘leave no one behind’. Arab countries have joined this global call and are looking for ways to respond to the agenda in the face of unprecedented political, economic, environmental, and social pressures and risks. These circumstances lead to increasing fragility and vulnerability, are shaped by rising poverty, protracted conflicts, climate change, natural resource insecurity, economic instability, and high unemployment rates—especially among youth and women.

2. While these are regional trends, development challenges faced by individual countries are diverse and require targeted responses. Some states struggle to address poverty thresholds, ensure access to services for their citizens, or provide basic livelihoods. Others strive to not fall back into poverty while boosting economic growth and job creation, and making development paths more sustainable. Others are affected by conflict or by spillover effects that result in protracted shocks and, at times, a reversal of development gains. A mix of such development challenges can be observed in the same country, and are often exacerbated by climate change and resource insecurity. The region is home to high, middle, and low-income countries, each with a different approach when it comes to pursuing development pathways.

3. The sections below outline the increased fragility and vulnerability of the Arab States region vis-à-vis the relationship between issues and their repercussions in different contexts.

Rising poverty, economic volatility and growing resource insecurity

4. The region improved in its Human Development Index (HDI) score from 0.613 in 2000 to 0.686 in 2014 but remained below the world average of 0.711¹. Although most Arab countries reduced extreme poverty during that time, conflict and wide-scale displacement have contributed to an increase in relative or absolute poverty since 2010.²

5. Economies in the region struggle to respond to the needs and aspirations of growing youth and urban populations, which have more than doubled in size since the 1980s, exceeding 400 million in 2017. The trend in the past few decades reveals a growth shortfall, an average growth between 1980 and 2015, with 3 per cent not being able to generate sufficient employment opportunities.³ As a result, the number of unemployed in the region is projected to rise from 11.5 million in 2000 to 16 million in 2020.⁴

6. Because of their growing number⁵ youth are a resource societies ought to tap into, but unemployment among Arab youth is the highest in the world at 29 per cent versus 13 per cent worldwide.⁶ In the region there are disparities in helping young people acquire the skills needed for developing their productive capacities, which contribute to this high rate.⁷ Young women face even greater challenges in overcoming social, cultural, and economic barriers to their economic inclusion, with their unemployment rate being twice that of young men.⁸

7. Projections for the coming years are not expected to see trends reverse as many governments are vulnerable to external shocks that constrain fiscal space,⁹ investments, and poverty

¹ This does not take into account regional variations: while the HDI value was 0.850 for Qatar (2014) it was only 0.470 in Djibouti (2014), according to UNDP Human Development Reports.

² Measuring Urban Poverty in the Arab Region: Social Development Bulletin, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, 2017.

³ Over 61 million new jobs were needed in the first two decades of the 21st century to absorb new labor force entrants (mainly young people).

⁴ Arab Development Portal estimate.

⁵ Two-thirds of the Arab population is under thirty years of age, half of which between the ages of 15 to 29.

⁶ World Development Indicators (WDI), The World Bank.

⁷ See www.knowledge4all.com.

⁸ WDI, The World Bank.

⁹ Many economies face high fiscal deficits (between 12 to 13 per cent) and high gross public debt—44 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) on average.

reduction strategies. Economic weakness is compounded by protracted conflicts and a rise in violent extremism, which results in slower investment, weak private sector engagement, and fewer alternative sources of income such as tourism. This is despite the positive effects of lower oil prices in some countries.

8. Trade and regional economic integration have potential to boost inclusive growth and development but they are largely untapped. Trade between several Arab countries has decreased because of ongoing violence and conflict, and despite progress (e.g. the Pan Arab Free Trade Area Agreement) oil excluded intra-regional trade in Arab States is the weakest in the world.¹⁰ The drop in oil prices and protectionist trends in global markets have exacerbated the issue, but recent negotiations on trade in services may provide an opportunity for increased trade in the region.

9. Development trajectories in the region are further affected by climate change and the increasing fragility of natural resources. The region is home to 14 of the world's 20 most water-stressed countries,¹¹ and by 2030 renewable water sources will be reduced by a further 20 per cent. Regarding energy, the region has the world's highest levels of solar radiation but renewable capacity is still a mere 7 per cent. Climate change may lead to a decrease in agricultural output by 21 per cent in value terms by 2080, negatively affecting rural-urban equality, with distinct consequences for women. Anticipated population growth and urbanization will place added strain on natural resources, which affects rural women who rely on natural resources for their livelihoods. Today, half the region is urban, compared to 45 per cent for developing countries, and will rise to three quarters of the entire region by 2050.¹²

Common governance deficits across countries and weakened social cohesion caused by conflicts and crises

10. Over the past six years, the region has seen an escalation in violence, along with more frequent and severe droughts and famine, with conflict and protracted crises in seven out of eighteen countries. These crises have exacted a devastating human toll, caused human suffering and displacement, and challenged development gains by damaging economies, productive capacities, infrastructure, and services, as well as having spillover effects on neighboring countries. The region is host to 57.5 per cent of all refugees¹³ and 48.8 per cent of all internally displaced people worldwide.¹⁴ The situation puts the resilience of refugees and host communities to test, places immense pressure on natural resources and basic services, and undermines social cohesion.

11. Such contexts disproportionately affect women and have led to a rise in child marriage and gender-based violence, reduced access to education and healthcare facilities, and increased numbers of female-headed households. In several countries, children and young people are at risk of being a "lost generation."

12. Over the past three decades, several violent extremist groups have emerged, drawing large numbers of young people into their ranks, taking advantage of their social and economic marginalization, and widening the power vacuum in certain countries. Recruitment extends across the region and globally, causing major security and development breaches.

13. Many longstanding development challenges in the Arab States are rooted in governance deficits,¹⁵ weakening the legitimacy of state institutions and equality before the law, and diverting resources from services and projects that could otherwise improve the lives of

¹⁰ Declining oil prices affect trade structures (fuel represents 57 per cent of the region's total exports-2015), www.comtrade.un.org.

¹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Aquastat Database, 2017: <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/data/query/results.html>.

¹² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) World Urbanization Prospects, 2014 revision.

¹³ Based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2016 statistical online database, see <http://www.unhcr.org/>.

¹⁴ Based on United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) 2017 Humanitarian Reports.

¹⁵ For extensive analysis, see the 2004 Arab Human Development Report (AHDR).

millions. Governance deficits pose a standing threat to the future of the region, undermining its resilience to political, economic, social, demographic, and environmental pressures.

14. In terms of governance efficiency and effectiveness, some countries, especially those affected by conflict, have experienced a collapse of local government systems, which adversely affects public service delivery. Despite slow advancements in some areas, international indicators confirm governance deficits. In the Transparency International 2016 Corruption Perception Index the region scores 32.7 out of 100, compared to a global average of 42.94.

15. Governance reforms have come to a halt due to security considerations in different countries. It has led to the tightening of public space, less freedom of expression and association, and declining civil society and public participation. This has fueled citizens' lack of confidence in institutions and translated into an unwillingness to use the ballot box, especially for youth.¹⁶ As the region with the highest Gender Gap,¹⁷ barriers to equality and increasing social and political conservatism constrict young women's choices, and hinder their political empowerment and participation.¹⁸

16. Throughout the regional programme cycle for 2014 to 2017, UNDP sought to advance the regional agenda on thematic areas like anti-corruption and integrity, social cohesion, disaster risk reduction and climate action, regional economic integration, and women's empowerment. The programme succeeded in boosting its regional position to connect with, and support, cross-country networks, amplify advocacy, and promote South-South cooperation and knowledge sharing. In recognizing the links between evidence-based policymaking and data, one of the main areas of work has been the promotion of thought leadership through extensive research and analysis, as well as the promotion of knowledge to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

17. The regional programme for 2018-2021 will build on past work, benefiting from a consultative design process that involved the participation of stakeholders.¹⁹ The added value of regional work will continue to lie in the application of the 'regionality principles'²⁰ to **help Arab countries reduce vulnerability and fragility, accelerate structural transformations for sustainable development, and build peaceful and resilient societies**. Efforts will assist countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, as well as other international commitments such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

18. The regional programme will address challenges and opportunities shared across all or some countries, and build on UNDP convening power as a trusted partner to support regional institutions, networks, and partners, and to offer evidence-based solutions, facilitating policy-dialogue and collective action with government, non-government actors, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector. This comparative advantage will be underpinned by a focus on knowledge linked to the UNDP global architecture, and featuring a cross-sectoral emphasis on the capacities, systems, and skills needed to transform societies and economies.

19. An independent evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and the regional programmes acknowledges the comparative advantage of the regional programme and the way in which it complements country programmes. It highlights the importance of regional, multi-stakeholder platforms for countries to work together and exchange lessons learned, address transnational risks, facilitate multi-country programming, and facilitate advocacy on shared challenges. The regional programme mid-term review (2016), and various project evaluations

¹⁶ AHDR 2016.

¹⁷ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index for 2016.

¹⁸ Women are underrepresented in civil service, the judiciary, military, and police/law enforcement. The proportion of seats held by women in national Arab parliaments have increased but are still 18.8 per cent compared to a global average of 23 per cent.

¹⁹ The process included a theory of change exercise, regional consultation (Amman in May 2017), and online discussion forum.

²⁰ 'Regionality principles' cover regional public goods and services, cross-border externalities and spillovers, sensitive cross-country or emerging issues, innovation and knowledge exchange, as well as south-south cooperation through regional partnerships and networks.

confirm this,²¹ calling for greater emphasis on knowledge management and thought leadership to support regional platforms.

20. The regional programme builds on these findings that emphasize the value of UNDP at the regional level in promoting regional policy dialogue and advocacy on sensitive issues. It will operationalize this approach by: (i) consolidating a knowledge base that promotes research, analysis, data gathering and dissemination, enabling evidence-based policymaking and thought leadership; (ii) fostering inclusive networks of stakeholders to enable peer-to-peer exchanges and collective action on primary development issues; (iii) supporting regional institutions in delivering sustainable development results, and (iv) scaling-up successful initiatives at the country level through regional exchanges that complement country platforms (in close collaboration with UNDP country offices).

21. An example of the successful application of this approach is on anti-corruption, where the regional programme supported the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET), which is comprised of 47 officials from 18 Arab countries and a “Non-Governmental Group” of 26 organizations from civil society, the private sector, and academia. Regional cooperation and knowledge-exchange led to the formulation of 12 new legal reform proposals since 2014, nine of which were adopted into law. On trade, support to the League of Arab States in 2017 facilitated the conclusion of negotiations on “Trade in Services,” which stalled for 14 years. On data and statistics, an “Arab Development Portal” was established in partnership with Arab Funds, which offers data on 12 development topics, 3,300 indicators, and technical assistance on the SDGs. The goal of each initiative has been to improve regional capacities to sustain programme results beyond UNDP engagement.

22. Strategic plan evaluations, 2016 mid-term reviews, and project evaluations emphasize the need for additional collaboration with United Nations organizations, civil society, and the private sector. The regional approach will be complemented by strengthening partnerships with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), benefiting from its mandate to work with Member States, and produce analysis and data on regional development issues. The regional programme will benefit from the sectoral expertise of other organizations like the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) on gender, the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on climate resilience, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Customs Organization (WCO) on trade, and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA) on crisis management. Efforts will be made to engage with the private sector and facilitate business practices that lead to greater SDG investments. The regional programme will expand its focus on civic engagement in policymaking processes to improve the environment for greater regional cooperation.

23. The strategic plan evaluation and regional programme mid-term review highlighted the issue of declining core resources and raised concerns over the sustainability of regional projects. The regional programme successfully responded to the matter by increasing non-core resource mobilization efforts, especially from regional partners such as the Arab Coordination Group, and Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation (MBRF).

II. Programme priorities and partnerships

24. The principal reference for identifying areas of work for the regional programme is the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. Guided by these frameworks—the regional programme is designed to respond to a development context marked by increasing fragility, vulnerability, and exclusion. This requires an approach that promotes regional cooperation and policy dialogue to foster sustainable growth that maximizes the potential of young Arabs, and strengthens

²¹ Project evaluations of Anti-Corruption Integrity Initiative (2015 and 2016), Aid for Trade Initiative for Arab States (2016), and Fostering Inclusive and Effective Participation of Women in Public Life (2016).

institutions for more peaceful societies. Because of the ongoing volatility in the region, risk-informed approaches are needed to foster knowledge exchange, and increase the capacities and capabilities of communities, institutions and stakeholders to anticipate and respond to shocks. By recognizing the diversity of the development settings and the challenges outlined in Section I, the regional programme response is framed through two outcomes. These outcomes reflect solutions pathways identified in the theory of change, and integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Outcome 1: Accelerate the structural transformation of productive capacities in a sustainable and inclusive manner

25. The SDGs provide an overarching framework for this outcome as “they recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs, including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.”²² The programme will assist partners in advancing regional cooperation and policy dialogue on inclusive and sustainable growth, and job-creation. The outcome will link regional economic integration, local economic development, knowledge-based economy, and the transition to green, low-carbon, climate-resilient pathways for sustainable livelihoods and employment opportunities. Guided by UNDP social and environmental standards, the regional programme will focus on processes that have long excluded or marginalized poor and vulnerable groups from economic opportunities or blocked access to natural resources.

Outcome 2: Strengthen institutions to promote inclusive participation, prevent conflict and build peaceful societies

26. Under this area of work stakeholders will focus on the root causes of conflict and governance deficits. The regional programme introduces a forward-looking perspective on how governments and non-governmental actors can cooperate to counteract fragilities while promoting democratic reform and fostering resilience. Governance-related efforts need to go hand-in-hand with reducing inequalities and exclusion that lower the participation of some groups, especially youth and women. Knowledge sharing, along with data production and dissemination, will be critical for enabling thought leadership, evidence-based decision-making, and tracking progress on the SDGs.

27. The “leave no one behind” principle will be applied throughout the regional programme—with dedicated interventions, and as a cross-cutting component. Gender equality and women’s empowerment continue to be central considerations in the proposed programme, with a focus on political participation and economic opportunities (SDGs 5 and 10). As a target group and partner, youth will receive greater attention with dedicated activities in all work areas and phases of programme implementation (SDGs 4, 8, 10 and 16).

28. The proposed programme will be guided by outcomes and solutions outlined in the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and take into consideration programmatic recommendations from the strategic plan evaluation. The programme will deliver integrated responses to identified challenges through six signature solutions, using the two above outcomes to tailor responses. The application of each solution is built on a theory of change (as explained in the annexes).

Keep people out of poverty

29. **Supporting efforts towards regional economic integration (SDGs 9 and 17).** UNDP will build evidence and promote a regional policy dialogue on the role of regional economic integration in fostering inclusive, job-rich and sustainable growth. The regional programme will continue supporting Arab economic integration with a focus on trade through analysis, facilitating policy changes, and complementing country-level interventions. This will be

²² See www.Un.org/sustainabledevelopmentagenda.

pursued through support to the League of Arab States (LAS) in designing policies and supporting the implementation of a regional gender-sensitive economic agenda, especially around the Pan-Arab Free Trade Agreement and Arab Customs Union. Efforts will be scaled-up to facilitate cross-border trade and transport corridors (e.g. between Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia) to optimize operational and transaction costs for businesses, with a view to generate tangible benefits for local development. UNDP will continue to collaborate with ESCWA, UNCTAD, WCO, among others.

30. Supporting integrated regional value chains and local economic development (SDGs 1 and 11). The regional programme will have, especially in its trade-related work, a focus on regional value chains that contribute to boosting productive capacities at the local level. It will invest in the sharing of regional and cross-regional experiences to generate inclusive economic opportunities in local markets and deliver infrastructure and services, especially for poorer populations. Cross-country exchanges will be facilitated on solutions for managing large influxes of refugees for countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. These areas of work provide opportunities for private sector engagement.

Strengthen effective, accountable and inclusive governance

31. Supporting public administration to foster accountability, transparency and citizen trust in institutions (SDGs 16 and 10). Anti-corruption and integrity represent fundamental entry points for broader governance reforms. The regional programme will build on earlier work and adopt new approaches to help public administrations be more inclusive and capable of efficiently collecting revenues and delivering equitable services. Continued support in implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption will be provided, by way of cross-country information exchange and the development of sector-specific preventative solutions (including risk-based approaches). By building on past cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and WCO—and by exploring partnerships with new donors and businesses—sector-specific interventions offer opportunities for scaling-up initiatives. This comprehensive approach will focus on engaging youth, women, and civil society as partners in promoting governance reforms and stronger accountability. For instance, support to ACINET and its non-governmental group will continue, along with the consolidation of youth integrity networks.

32. Fostering local governance, inclusion, and participation (SDGs 10, 11 and 16). Supporting local governance plays a role in the promotion of citizen inclusion and participation. A regional platform will be established to facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices in local governance, supporting country-level efforts in the implementation of integrated local governance and development frameworks (in post-crisis and non-crisis contexts). The regional programme will create a regional policy space to engage civil society groups on the subject of governance mechanisms and systems. This includes raising the role of youth and women in decision-making by addressing the barriers they face. Supporting fair and inclusive elections is another important entry point for restoring citizen trust in institutions. In collaboration with DPA, the regional programme will continue to collaborate with the Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support in implementing regional electoral interventions that promote knowledge sharing and cooperation on elections.

33. Facilitating social cohesion and conflict prevention (SDGs 16 and 4). A focus will be placed on facilitating dialogue at the regional level for relevant groups (including non-traditional groups like religious leaders, media representatives, etc.) and developing their capacities to settle disputes and prevent conflict. This involves improving stakeholder understanding of violent extremism, and refining preventive responses that limit the cross-border and cross-regional reach of violent extremist groups. The regional approach will actively engage women and youth, and create links between local and global efforts, in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism

(PVE). Work will build on collaborations with other regions, particularly the joint project on PVE with UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa.

34. Supporting better planning for migration and displacement (SDG 10) requires tackling the negative effects migration and displacement have on poverty and development, and having a better understanding of the humanitarian-security-development nexus. The regional programme will analyse the underlying causes that lead to migration and displacement, and support governance actors in the use of knowledge and evidence for prevention and long-term planning, and the integration of refugees in their plans. This will apply to countries with large influxes, or outflows, of refugees (e.g. Syria and neighboring countries, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa—in cooperation with RBA).

Enhance prevention and recovery for resilient societies

35. Supporting governance institutions to strengthen crisis management (SDGs 1, 11, 13 and 16). The regional programme will continue to strengthen the crisis management capacities of regional institutions—addressing conflict and climatic disaster challenges—and maintaining support to LAS, in partnership with the European Union, as well as building on collaborative efforts with DPA and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). In recognizing the disproportionate effects on the poor, the regional programme will support efforts to integrate climate risks into crisis prevention and recovery, thereby recovering infrastructure and rendering livelihoods resilient to future climate-related shocks.

36. The regional programme will play a role in **nurturing cross-country and sub-regional collaboration for resilience-building across the region (SDGs 1, 11 and 16)**, particularly targeting crisis-affected countries. It will facilitate the sharing of knowledge/technology, best practices and partnership modalities to improve coherence in the resilience interventions, with a focus on municipal resilience. This will build on partnerships with UNHCR and other stakeholders through the UNDP Sub-Regional Facility under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan architecture that could be expanded beyond Syria-crisis affected countries.

Promote nature-based solutions for a sustainable planet and close the clean energy gap

37. Climate resilient, sustainable use of ecosystems and natural resources (SDGs 6, 13, 14 and 15) is essential for expanding economic opportunities in a sustainable way. The regional programme will assist partners in mainstreaming action on climate resilience, water conservation, and ecosystems into broader development and recovery policies. This will help countries introduce green and climate-resilient models that prioritize the mitigation of risks for the poorest populations. Priorities will focus on the sustainable use of biodiversity, land and water ecosystems, trans-boundary resource management, and building adaptive capacities in sectors like agriculture and water to benefit poor and vulnerable populations. In addition to fostering cross-country collaboration and capacity development, the regional programme will support countries in accessing climate funds via the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund, which may create opportunities for scaling-up initiatives. Activities involve collaboration with UN Environment, WFP, and ESCWA, among others.

38. Supporting transition to low-carbon, sustainable energy solutions (SDGs 7 and 13). Another priority is to scale-up investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency and access by embracing sustainable energy as a job-creating sector and a foundation for expanding access to poor and displaced communities and populations, especially women. This includes de-risking investments in the public and private sectors, expanding use of sustainable energy for crisis recovery, and addressing the food-energy-water nexus through innovative technology and policies. This stream of work relies on strong partnerships with private sector entities.

Foster knowledge and data for human development

39. Supporting knowledge systems and capacities, and SDG monitoring (SDGs 9 and 17) will involve developing the capacity of relevant actors to produce and utilize data and knowledge to create an evidence-base for policymaking. Doing so will boost cross-country cooperation in implementing SDG strategies, particularly by identifying gaps in data production and providing technical assistance to partners on SDG data quality and availability. UNDP will offer a multi-level monitoring mechanism to track progress on the SDGs, building on a regional network established by national statistical institutes, and in collaboration with regional institutions such as the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics and ESCWA. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the regional programme will promote regional exchanges on innovation and technology, using them to accelerate human progress, bridge the digital divide, and solve sustainable development challenges.

40. Generating knowledge and collecting data to induce policy debate and evidence-based policymaking (SDG 17). UNDP will continue to promote a regional knowledge base to make information available on specific development topics. The main mechanism is the flagship AHDR, which resulted in the creation and dissemination of people-centered development knowledge throughout the region since 2002. The programme will continue to support the development of this publication for thought leadership, advocacy and evidence-based policymaking purposes. In addition, the regional programme is invested in producing and disseminating data (and complementing official statistics), especially when data is not available. UNDP will place additional focus on big data and advanced technology, in close collaboration with regional partners, and building on longstanding partnerships with MBRF, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for International Development (OFID), and the Arab Coordination Group.

41. Supporting efforts for a knowledge-based economic transformation and facilitating employment opportunities in productive sectors (SDGs 4 and 8). Education, including vocational and technical education, must correspond to labor market needs and offer skills and opportunities for the next generation. This requires knowledge-based economic transformation comprised of innovation and entrepreneurship components that are supported by technology, research and development—all of which are critical for preparing youth for the future. UNDP regional programme work on knowledge systems will provide evidence to regional and national partners, and result in nurturing dialogues, new collaborations between education and industry sectors, and supporting transformation in the ways they work on skills and production systems. Such efforts rely on collaborative arrangements with universities, research institutes, and the private sector.

Strengthen gender equality

42. A partnership that includes the Arab Women Organization, LAS and UN Women will **support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a gender perspective.** This will include assisting stakeholders in mainstreaming gender across all SDGs, improving gender-sensitive SDGs monitoring, and facilitating regional multi-stakeholder dialogues that provide a knowledge base for advocacy. Efforts will build on previous work around the SDGs and the use of an online database that stores information on the status of gender-related human rights.

43. Supporting civil society networks to promote peaceful societies (SDGs 16 and 5). Work will be undertaken with peace and security networks, regional institutions, civil society networks such as Karama, and United Nations organizations, like UN Women, to promote the role of women and youth—which require differentiated strategies of engagement—in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.²³ The programme will engage existing networks for women and youth to promote peace and improve grassroots connections across the region by sharing knowledge and facilitating interaction. Additional efforts will help relevant

²³ See United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325, 2250, and 2242.

stakeholders, especially in conflict countries, integrate the rule of law and provisions for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms into legislative frameworks.

III. Programme and risk management

44. This regional programme document outlines UNDP contributions to regional/global results, and serves as the primary unit of accountability to the Executive Board for results and resources assigned to the programme. Accountabilities of managers at the country, regional, and headquarter levels regarding regional programmes is prescribed in the organizational Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures and the Internal Control Framework.

45. Five risks will be monitored and addressed to avoid obstacles to successful programme implementation. The first is that while conflicts and spillovers are expected to continue during the programme period, an overemphasis on crises in the region may undermine the work that needs to take place to avoid longer-term threats to development such as: climate change, economic diversification, and inclusive governance reforms—especially those catering to women and youth in non-conflict settings. **Explicit acknowledgement of different development pathways, the humanitarian-development nexus, and flexible responses** that balance short and long-term development responses, will address such concerns. The second is related to gaps in data and evidence needed for SDG planning and monitoring. Data and statistics are not always available or uniform, making it difficult to compare across countries and with international sources. The regional programme is invested in **leveling-up data and statistics**, closely collaborating with national statistical institutes and developing tools to assess data availability that could help mitigate related risks. The third involves UNDP mitigating risks that involve regional overlap with country level work. To avoid such risks **UNDP will strengthen coordination between its regional programme, country offices, and technical teams at the regional hub**. The active engagement of country offices and national stakeholders in the design process of this document is expected to improve coordination.

46. The final two risks involve outreach and resource mobilization. For the fourth risk, it was determined that outreach through traditional methods (workshops and the dissemination of printed information) is limited. To address this, **the regional programme introduced an online public “knowledge base” to archive all knowledge tools and products**. UNDP will continue developing e-platforms, data portals, and mobile applications that combine statistics, analysis, and advanced data visualization on different themes. The final risk is the limited number of development partners that are funding regional work, which poses a threat to securing long-term resources. To counter this, **UNDP will diversify its resource mobilization efforts to raise funds for the programme**. Experience shows that increased interest from donors, particularly regional actors, leads to greater programme sustainability. Should resource mobilization efforts not yield expected results, UNDP will review and reprioritize the activities of the regional programme.

47. The regional programme will be flexible in responding to ongoing United Nations reform priorities and seek stronger collaboration with other United Nations organizations in positively contributing to these priorities.

48. The programme will be implemented through the Direct Implementation Modality, and UNDP social and environmental standards will be applied. UNDP will expand South-South cooperation through existing and new regional stakeholder networks to strengthen capacities, especially in economic cooperation, anti-corruption and integrity, climate change, electoral assistance, and conflict prevention.

49. In accordance with Executive Board decision DP/2-013/32, all direct costs associated with project implementation should be charged to the concerned projects.

IV. Monitoring and evaluation

50. Management, monitoring, and evaluation of the regional programme will be grounded in programming arrangements set out in UNDP programme and operations policies and procedures. The 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, and its recommendations for a United Nations development system that is fit to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, will guide the regional programme.

51. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) will exercise oversight and accountability for the implementation of the regional programme, in line with RBAS organizational structure. A dedicated management team, as part of the Regional Hub, will ensure programme management and oversight, and an integrated Management Support Unit (MSU) will provide operational and programme management support. This structure has proven to increase programme quality and effectiveness, and bring about cost-reduction and efficiency gains.

52. Through the MSU, the regional programme houses a strong results-based management (RBM) capacity, system, and tools, which enables it able to capture programme-wide results and financial information, and ensure coherence and corporate compliance. The MSU is responsible for monitoring, tracking, and reporting on results, through a “regional programme dashboard” and “annualized monitoring framework,” as per the Results and Resources Framework (RRF) (see Annex 1). A dedicated team is responsible for supporting knowledge, data, and information, communication, and technology (ICT) management. The MSU provides continuous training to staff on how to update and retain capacities on RBM.

53. UNDP will conduct a mid-term review, and final evaluation that covers all projects, as well as evaluate one project from each outcome area, allocating 5 per cent of the budget for monitoring and evaluation. It will apply quality assessments for all projects. The UNDP gender marker, a tool for greater accountability in the area of gender equality, rolled out in 2015 to improve gender-sensitive planning, targeting, and monitoring.

54. A focus on research, data collection and visualization will be important for monitoring development trends, tracking SDG progress, and identifying needs and priorities. The Arab Development Portal,²⁴ an initiative launched by the regional programme, will be used to collect data for the RRF and related SDG indicators. This will enable stakeholders to identify intervention-related successes and gaps, and make corrective actions that are based on evidence. UNDP will allocate a portion of regional programme resources to programme development, which includes funding pilot projects and new initiatives to ensure flexibility when responding to emerging needs.

55. This document links programme outcomes/outputs to SDGs targets and indicators to allow the tracking of contributions to achievements of relevant goals through data collection, including an “SDG tracking tool.”

56. The RRF is linked to the UNDP Strategic Plan Integrated RRF to capture the contributions of the regional programme in a clear and systematized manner.

²⁴ See www.arabdevelopmentportal.org.

Annex. Results and resources framework for Arab States (2018-2021)

| OUTCOME 1: Accelerate structural transformation of productive capacities in a sustainable and inclusive manner | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| Related to Strategic Plan Outcome 2 | | | | | |
| Outcome indicators, baselines | Solution | Regional programme outputs | Contribution to SDG targets | Major partners | Indicative resources (\$) |
| <p>Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions by selected measures of multidimensional poverty (SDG 1.2.2) Baseline: 18.2% (2015) Source: arabdevelopmentportal.com Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Growth rate-real GDP (SDG8.1.1) Baseline: 3% (average 1980-2016) Source: World Bank Frequency: Annual</p> <p>% of Arab intra-regional trade Baseline: 10.8 (2015) Source: United Nations-Comtrade Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities (SDG 8.5.2) Baseline: 19.96% (women); 8.9% (men); 42.7% (young women); young men (29%) Source: arabdevelopmentportal.com Key Indicators of the Labor Market (KILM)-ILO (2015) Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Labour Force Participation Rate (by sex, age) Baseline: 22.3% (women); 75.1% (men) Source: UNDP Human Development Report (HDR)/KILM-ILO Frequency: Annual</p> | <p>#1 Poverty</p> <p>#2 Governance</p> | <p>1.1.1 Capacities developed for progressive expansion of inclusive regional economic integration (Strategic Plan 1.1.2) 1.1.1.1 Extent to which the capacity of sub-regional and regional organizations is strengthened to utilize trade and economic integration to promote growth and economic opportunities Baseline: 2* Target: 4 Source: LAS policies; countries' policies and strategies; project reports/evaluations Frequency: Annual</p> <p>1.1.1.2 Number of sustainable development plans integrating trade as per regional economic and trade-integration strategies Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Pan Arab Free Trade Agreement implementation plans; Project reports and evaluation; LAS resolutions Frequency: Annual</p> <p>1.1.1.3 Number of local authorities that integrate regional value chains in development plans and responses Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Project reports/evaluations Frequency: Annual</p> | <p>SDGs: 1.b; 9.1; 17.9; 17.10; 17.11; 17.12</p> <p>Indirect: 1.1; 1.2; 2.b; 5.1; 8.2; 8.3; 8.5; 8.6; 10.1; 11.a</p> <p>SDGs: 1.b; 8.3; 11.a; 16.6;</p> <p>Indirect: 1.5; 5.5; 11.3; 8.5; 8.6; 16.7</p> | <p>League of Arab States (LAS), Line ministries (trade/finance/planning/local development), Private sector/small and medium enterprises, Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Central/local governments, UNDP country offices, UNCTAD, ESCWA, WCO</p> <p>Line ministries (public works/local government), CSOs, Central/local governments, UNDP country offices</p> | <p>Regular: 0 Other: 7,400,000</p> <p>Regular: 1,208,000 Other: 0</p> |

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| <p>Level of access to sustainable energy (SDG 7.1.1 adapted) Baseline: To be confirmed (TBC) Source: Arab Future Energy Index (AFEX 2017) Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Food security index (SDG 2.1.2 adapted) Baseline: 62.1 Source: Global Food Security Index 2015 Frequency: Biannual</p> <p>Renewable energy consumption (SDG 7.2.1 adapted) Baseline: 4.2% Source: World Bank, Sustainable Energy for All (2014) Frequency: Annual</p> | | <p>Frequency: Annual</p> <p>1.2.1.2 Number of local economic development and economic recovery systems enhanced through sub-regional and cross-country programmatic cooperation and exchange Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Countries' LED policies; project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> | | | |
| | #3 Resilience | <p>1.3.1 Risk-informed development policies and plans, that incorporate integrated solutions to reduce disaster risks, enable climate change adaptation and mitigation (Strategic Plan 1.3.1; 2.3.1; 3.3.1)</p> <p>1.3.1.1 Number of countries enabled through regional exchange to link prevention policies and early warning systems, and to integrate climate risks Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> | <p>SDGs: 11.b; 13.1;</p> <p>Indirect: 1.5; 11.5; 13.2;</p> | <p>LAS Arab Water Council UN Environment, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), WFP, World Meteorological Organization, Islamic Development Bank, Relevant line ministries</p> | <p>Regular: 1,000,000 Other: 0</p> |
| | #4 Planet and energy | <p>1.4.1 Regional capacities strengthened for climate-resilient use of natural resources and transformation to clean energy and zero-carbon development (Strategic Plan 1.4.1; 1.5.1; 2.1.1; 2.4.1; 2.5.1; 3.5.1)</p> <p>1.4.1.1 Number of countries with increased access to sustainable energy solutions through cross-country collaboration Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>1.4.1.2 Number of regionally supported national strategies that take integrated approaches for climate resilient ecosystem management Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>1.4.1.3 Number of countries with increased access to climate finance Baseline: 1 Target: 5</p> | <p>SDGs: 2.4; 6.4; 6.b; 7.a; 7.b; 13.2; 13.a; 15.2; 15.9</p> <p>Indirect: 2.1; 6.3; 6.5; 7.1; 7.2 8.2; 13.3; 13.b; 14.2; 15.1</p> | <p>LAS Arab Water Council Regional research centres (RCREEE, AAST) Line ministries (environment, water and irrigation, energy) United Nations organizations (e.g. ESCWA/UN Environment/WFP/ UNISDR and UNDP country offices), Islamic Development Bank</p> | <p>Regular: 2,500,000 Other: 0</p> |

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| | | Source: GCF/GEF allocations; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual | | | |
| | #5 Knowledge | <p>1.5.1 Capacities and systems developed to promote knowledge-based economic transformations that foster collaboration between education and industry (Strategic Plan 1.1.2)</p> <p>1.5.1.1 Number of countries benefiting from knowledge platforms and policy dialogue facilitated to promote digital learning and skills-development Baseline: 0 Target: 8 Source: Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>1.5.1.2 Number of evidence and analysis tools generated on knowledge systems to support cross-country evidence base Baseline: 1 Target: 4 Source: Arab Knowledge Index; Knowledge4All; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> | SDGs: 4.4; Indirect: 4.7; 8.5; 8.6 | Universities, Research centres, United Nations organizations, MBRF | Regular: 0 Other: 4,000,000 |
| | #6 Gender | <p>1.6.1 Regional capacities and policies strengthened to advance women's empowerment (Strategic Plan 1.6.1; 3.6.1)</p> <p>1.6.1.1 Number of regional women's networks with enhanced capacities to support the achievement of gender-related SDGs Baseline: 0 Target: 2 Source: Capacity assessment of regional networks; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Biannual</p> <p>1.6.1.2 Extent to which regional trade policy-making and negotiations integrate gender responsive mechanisms Baseline: 1* Target: 3 Source: Regional/national trade strategies and policies; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> | SDGs: 5.5; Indirect: 5.1; 5.a; 5.c; 8.5; 17.9 | Regional women's networks and machineries, LAS, Line ministries (trade/finance), Sida | Regular: 1,250,000 Other: 800,000 |
| OUTCOME 2: Strengthen institutions to promote inclusive participation, prevent conflict and build peaceful societies | | | | | |
| Related to Strategic Plan Outcome 3 | | | | | |
| Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public (SDG 16.5.1) | #2 Governance | 2.2.1 Institutions and systems enabled to address awareness, prevention and enforcement of anti-corruption measures (Strategic Plan 1.2.3) | SDGs: 16.5; 16.6; | Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network, | Regular: 2,000,000 Other: 6,000,000 |

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| <p>Proxy indicator: Corruption Perception Index Baseline: 32.7 (2016) Source: Corruption Perception Index Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Number of countries reporting progress on SDGs in multi-stakeholder frameworks (SDG 17.16.1) Baseline: 4 Source: United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Proportion of sustainable indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target (SDG 17.18.1) Baseline: TBC Source: SDG tracking tool (2017) Frequency: Regular</p> <p>Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (SDG 5.5.1) Baseline: 15.5% (national) Source: HDR 2015 Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Voter turnout in national elections, disaggregated by sex, age and excluded groups (Strategic Plan 2.3) Baseline: 54% Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2014-2017) Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Number of conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population by sex, age (SDG 16.1.2) Baseline: 15 Source: WDI 2017 Frequency: TBC</p> | | <p>2.2.1.1 Number of proposals adopted by public and private entities to reduce vulnerabilities to corruption in specific sectors and across them Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Countries' laws/by-laws; ACINET's ministerial statements; project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.2.1.2 Number of regionally-supported products and platforms enabling wider participation in transparency and accountability dialogues and reforms Baseline: 0 Target: 8 Source: National Transparency Centers; project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.2.2 Regional platforms for policy dialogue enabled to support civic engagement, constitution-making, electoral and parliamentary processes and institutions to promote inclusion, transparency and accountability (Strategic Plan 2.2.2)</p> <p>2.2.2.1 Number of electoral institutions adopting regional guidelines (Arab EMBs) for electoral management Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Arab EMBs recommendations; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.2.2.2 Number of youth-led innovative solutions for civic engagement catalysed through regional support for SDG implementation Baseline: 0 Target: 12 Source: Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.2.2.3 Number of parliaments with strengthened capacities through regional cooperation for SDG accountability Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: Project reports/evaluation; parliamentary by-laws/draft laws Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.2.3 Regional and sub-regional dialogue and policy space expanded to support national capacities for social cohesion, prevention of violent extremism and durable solutions to displacement (Strategic Plan 3.2.1; 3.3.2)</p> | <p>Indirect: 5.5; 5.c; 16.7; 17.9; 16.10</p> <p>SDGs: 10.2; 16.7;</p> <p>Indirect: 5.1; 5.5;</p> | <p>Anti-corruption commissions, Parliamentarians, Line ministries (health/trade/justice), UNODC, Universities, CSOs, Siemens II, United States of America State Department, UNDP country offices</p> <p>Electoral management bodies (EMBs), Regional parliamentary networks, CSO networks, Youth networks, UNDP country offices</p> <p>Religious Leaders, Media, Ministries of endowment,</p> | |
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| <p>Direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product, disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, attributed to disasters (SDG 1.5.2) Baseline: \$1,823,000 million US dollars (from eight countries) Source: Emergency Events Database (2011-2016) Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Number of forcibly displaced people, disaggregated by type, sex and age Baseline: 57% out of (total) world refugees and 48.8% of (total) world internally displaced people Source: UNOCHA Frequency: Annual</p> <p>Gender Gap Index (GGI) Baseline: 40% Source: Global GGI 2016 Frequency: Annual</p> | | <p>2.2.3.1 Number of institutions representing youth, religious leaders and media actively engaged in evidence-based regional policy dialogue and exchange to promote social cohesion, peace and security Baseline: 0 Target: 10 Source: Interreligious dialogues' report; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.2.3.2 Number of evidence-based regional stakeholder exchanges on PVE Baseline: 0 Target: 6 Source: Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.2.3.3 Number of development plans supported to integrate migration and displacement response through regional evidence and analysis Baseline: 0 Target: 3 Source: Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> | <p>SDGs: 4.7; 10.2; 10.7 16.a</p> <p>Indirect: 16.1; 16.4; 16.6</p> | <p>LAS, European Union, Government of Canada, United Nations organizations (e.g. UN Women)</p> | |
| | #3 Resilience | <p>2.3.1 Sub-regional cooperation and related capacities enhanced for stabilization, rapid recovery from crisis and return to sustainable development pathways (Strategic Plan 3.1.1; 3.1.2)</p> <p>2.3.1.1 Level of country engagement in sub-regional cooperation platforms to support resilience and stabilization response plans Baseline: 2* Target: 4 Source: Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan; SRF; project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.3.2 Regional capacities and multi-country evidence-based assessment and planning tools enable prevention and preparedness to limit the impact of crisis and conflict (Strategic Plan 2.3.1)</p> <p>2.3.2.1 Extent to which the crisis management capacity of regional institutions and actors is strengthened Baseline: 2* Target: 3 Source: LAS reports; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> | <p>SDGs: 1.5; 11.5</p> <p>Indirect: 1.a; 16.6</p> <p>SDGs: 11.5, 16.6</p> <p>Indirect: 16.1</p> | <p>Line ministries (planning/local development), Local governments, UNHCR, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, LAS, European Union, UNDP country offices, UNDP Sub-regional facility (SRF)</p> | <p>Regular: 600,000 Other: 2,000,000</p> |
| | #5 Knowledge | <p>2.5.1 Capacities developed to analyse progress towards the SDGs, using innovative and data-driven solutions (Strategic Plan 1.1.1)</p> <p>2.5.1.1 Number of institutions working on data and statistics actively participating in regional policy dialogue and exchange</p> | <p>SDGs: 17.9; 17.16; 17.18; 17.19</p> | <p>Statistical institutions,</p> | <p>Regular: 500,000 Other: 3,000,000</p> |

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| | | <p>Baseline: 6 Target: 10 Source: Project reports/evaluation; Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics recommendations and activities Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.5.1.2 Number of countries that adopt the SDG Tracking System for SDG monitoring Baseline: 0 Target: 4 Source: SDG tracking pool; project reports/evaluation Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.5.2 Policies, plans and partnerships for sustainable development draw upon UNDP’s thought leadership, knowledge and evidence (Strategic Plan 2.2.1)</p> <p>2.5.2.1 Number of knowledge products providing evidence and analysis around key sustainable development issues made available to policy makers and broader public (disaggregated by themes) Baseline: 200/9 themes Target: 300/12 themes Source: http://rbas-knowledgeplatform.org/Products Frequency: Quarterly</p> <p>2.5.2.2 Number of interactive web-based platforms fostered to promote linkages between knowledge and sustainable development at national and regional levels Baseline: 4 Target: 6 Source: Regional programme e-portals Frequency: Annual</p> <p>2.5.2.3 Number of South-South Cooperation exchanges facilitated by regional programme activities Baseline: 150 (2014-2017) Target: 250 Source: Online calendar of events; projects reports/evaluations Frequency: Annual</p> | | <p>United Nations organizations (e.g. ESCWA), MBRF, Arab Coordination Group, Academia/research centres</p> | |
| | #6 Gender | <p>2.6.1 Capacities strengthened to raise awareness on and undertake legal, policy and institutional reforms to fight gender discrimination and ensure women’s participation in political and peace processes (Strategic Plan 2.6.1)</p> <p>2.6.1.1 Number of electoral management bodies’ strategies which mainstream gender considerations and promote the role of women in elections</p> | <p>SDGs: 5.5; 5.c; 16.a</p> <p>Indirect: 5.1; 5.a; 5.c; 8.5;</p> | <p>Regional women networks and machineries (including peace and security),</p> | <p>Regular: 1,250,000 Other: 800,000</p> |

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| | <p>Baseline: 0 Target: 5 Source: Electoral management bodies strategies; Project reports and evaluation Frequency: Biannual</p> <p>2.6.1.2 Number of regional women’s networks with enhanced capacities to support constitution-making legal and judiciary reforms Baseline: 0 Target: 2 Source: Capacity assessment of regional networks; Project reports/evaluation Frequency: Biannual</p> <p>2.6.1.3 Level of engagement of women in contributing to peace and security through regional networks Baseline: 2* Target: 3 Source: Project reports/evaluations Frequency: Annual</p> | <p>10.2; 16.1; 16.b</p> | <p>Security institutions/relevant line ministries, UN Women, UNDP country offices</p> | |
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