

Press Release

**LAS-Japan-UNDP Experts Roundtable:
COVID-19 Recovery an opportunity to accelerate SDGs achievement
in the Arab States**

Online, 10 December, 2020 – The League of Arab States (LAS), the Government of Japan, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) convened today a senior-policy roundtable under the theme of “Towards Recovery from COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities for the Arab Region.” The roundtable brought together experts and stakeholders from across the region to discuss recovery policies and explore pathways to build forward better towards a sustainable future.

“The tripartite LAS-Japan-UNDP meetings are an opportune chance and mechanism addressing rapid recovery from the Pandemic and aim to achieve security and implement SDGs in the Arab region” said Rihab I. Hamid, Director of Economic Relations Department, LAS.

As the Pandemic continues to strain countries in the region, today’s dialogue focused on specific economic and social sectors that had been particularly hit hard by the crisis. Experts from the Arab region and UNDP shared their assessments and presented policy responses to address the impact on vulnerable businesses and groups in the society that have been disproportionately hurt by the pandemic. Building onto the policy discussion, participants from LAS, Japan, and UNDP confirmed the importance of turning the crisis into an opportunity and strengthening regional and international cooperation as a way to move forward and accelerate efforts towards achievement of SDGs, through enhancing efforts of Social and Economic related bodies of the League of Arab States.

“This pandemic causes something much more than a health crisis”, said Kenichiro Matsubayashi, Minister & Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan in the Arab Republic of Egypt. “Japan, in line with its vision of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”, is determined to continuously collaborate with Arab countries in their efforts to build a post-Corona world back better and more resilient, and to maintain peace and prosperity in our common future.

The roundtable represented the third such dialogue co-hosted by the tri-partite partnership since 2019, after the successful conclusion of the first Arab-Japan Political Dialogue in September 2017. The roundtable series aims to enhance cooperation between Japan and the Arab states and to establish a policy dialogue platform encompassing common priorities and concerns for the region.

“Sound policies to mitigate the devastating socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, particularly on the most vulnerable people, are critical to safeguard hard-won progress toward the SDGs,” said Sarah Poole, Director a.i. of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, UNDP. “UNDP stands ready to work with national and regional stakeholders to turn policy ideas coming out of today’s meeting into concrete action for inclusive and sustainable development across the region.”