REGIONAL REPORT

Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in Conflict-affected Countries in the Arab Region

Background

Consistent with ongoing efforts by the League of Arab States (LAS) to achieve peace and sustainable development for the people of the Arab region, and concerned by the worsening trajectory of countries affected by conflict and humanitarian crises, the Arab Committee for Sustainable Development at its third meeting in December 2017 requested LAS to prepare a regional report on the importance of SDGs and their implementation in conflict affected countries.

As a regional initiative, participating countries in conflict, post-conflict, and conflict affected settings include: The Republic of Iraq, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, The Lebanese Republic, The State of Libya, The Federal Republic of Somalia, The Republic of the Sudan, The Syrian Arab Republic and The Republic of Yemen.

An inclusive and multi-stakeholder partnership

The Report was prepared based on an inclusive and multistakeholder partnership led by the Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation at LAS and in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS). A regional task force including UN and non-UN partners provided inputs that were further supplemented through ongoing e-consultations with policymakers and government departments, UN Resident Coordinators and country teams, as well as civil-society organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

Methodology

Echoing the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda, the Report calls for an integrated framework to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in country contexts faced with complex and often recurring challenges related to planning, programming, prioritization and resources. Based on country-specific and regional reviews, as well as in-depth analyses and extensive consultations, the Report includes evidence-based examples of lessons learned and successes in using the SDGs to catalyze the transition towards greater peace and prosperity. These examples show how the principles described in the Report present an opportunity in different peacebuilding, development and humanitarian contexts to extend coordination efforts between central and local levels by strengthening the localization of the SDGs, enhancing institutional cooperation and data collection, and managing competing priorities and challenges, including the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The Report further adds value by offering an exhaustive repository of existing frameworks to strengthen responses to gaps and opportunities.

Key findings

1. **Understanding the interconnectedness of the 2030 Agenda:** The 2030 Agenda calls for integrated implementation, which recognizes that development, peace and human rights are linked and mutually reinforcing. It is crucial that all entities responsible for the implementation

of SDGs treat them in their entirety instead of approaching them as a list of individual goals to choose from. The transformative approach of human security presents a comprehensive plan of action which countries can translate into national policies that bring tangible improvements to people's lives. It provides broad guidance for policymaking by establishing means of implementation, follow-up and review mechanisms.

2. **Addressing vulnerabilities and eliminating exclusion are key to achieving the SDGs in conflict-affected countries:** The 2030 Agenda aims to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance long-term prospects. A strategic entry point in identifying common priorities in conflict-affected settings is through addressing vulnerabilities of populations and required remedies to overcome such challenges. This will ensure an inclusive shift to sustainable development, where peace dividends are shared by all. Eliminating the systematic structural causes of exclusion is a priority of the human security approach. Stakeholders should consider including vulnerable populations and integrating IDPs into SDG planning, programming and policies.

3. **Achieving SDGs should consider a universal yet contextual approach:** Since the challenges to attaining SDGs in countries affected by conflict are multifaceted, achieving SDGs requires a universal approach that takes into consideration the regional, national and local priorities and structures. Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach in addressing challenges and risks to human conditions, the human security lens emphasizes context-specific differences and challenges related to the engagement of actors and the capacities of people and Governments concerned.

4. **Adopting a common vision to achieve collective outcomes:** A multistakeholder approach is critical. The United Nations' New Way of Working (NWOW) calls for collaboration between humanitarian and development efforts towards collective outcomes. Its modality is based on the comparative advantage of actors. Achieving SDGs in countries affected by conflict requires a common vision aimed to eliminate silos and build a bridge between short-term assistance and long-term development. The human security approach provides a framework to facilitate multisectoral responses that form a common vision capable of tackling multidimensional challenges in a proactive and preventive manner; ensuring that no one is left behind.

5. **Overcoming data constraints is key to understanding SDG progress:** It is critical that gaps in data collection, access and monitoring needed to analyse progress made towards the attainment of SDGs in conflict-affected countries are addressed. Data collection efforts should include groups at risk of being left behind, such as IDPs, and consider pathways to enhance their representation in SDG data sets. Strengthening partnerships through regional and international frameworks on data monitoring and analysis would support national efforts, as well as activities undertaken by United Nations and other actors to monitor and produce data on the SDGs.

Future plans for the implementation and mainstreaming of key findings

In addition to the launch and the subsequent high-level events planned to disseminate the findings of the Report, a coordination mechanism will be established at LAS with support of a technical team comprising of UN and non-UN partners. Operating across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, future efforts will benefit from a collective repository of tools and approaches; strive to overcome the obstacles to joint analysis, planning and programming; support country-specific prioritization and harmonize efforts to localize national development plans; and tackle the interrelated challenges of poverty, vulnerability, inequality, exclusion and displacement; *among others.* These efforts will build on the findings of the Report and will institutionalize a new way of working together for the region.

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