League of Arab States

TOWARDS AN ARAB URBAN AGENDA

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Foreword

League of Arab States

The League of Arab States has established strong and effective cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), manifested in meetings and forums held by the two organizations in the field of housing and urban development. These relations have witnessed significant progress after the establishment of the Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) in 2012.
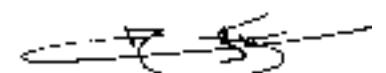
The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) has been a milestone event also for the Arab region in addressing sustainable development at the local level.

Through the development and implementation of various initiatives and cooperation opportunities with national and local governments across all Arab states, a special relationship with UN-Habitat has been maintained in the field of housing and sustainable urban development, culminating into realization of visions and strategies for housing and sustainable urban development policies.

In this context, the two partners worked together to elaborate an *Arab Urban Agenda,* which illustrates the efforts and ambitious initiatives undertaken by Arab countries in the field of housing and urban development to raise economic growth rates and encourage more balanced and inclusive economic and social policies aiming at improving the standard of living of Arab citizens. The importance of the *Arab Urban Agenda* lies in presenting the vision of the Arab region for the future pattern of sustainable urban development based on the *Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030.*

In conclusion, I would like to call on UN-Habitat and all Arab States to further cooperation and coordination to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new approaches in the international development agenda, especially the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and the Paris Agreement to combat Climate Change and the New Urban Agenda, the outcome of the 3rd Conference for Housing and Urban Development (Habitat III) in October 2016.

Dr. Djamel Eddine Djaballah
Minister plenipotiary, Environment, Housing, Water Resources & Sustainable Development Department League of Arab States

UN-Habitat

The Arab region is one of the most urbanized regions in the world, with 56 per cent of its residents living in cities. This region, comprising the Maghreb, Mashreq, Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the Southern tier subregions, is currently undergoing remarkable transformations. While some countries are witnessing rapid wealth generation, others are facing economic challenges and conflict, including post-conflict situations, triggering major displacement and migration of large population sections; resulting in significant urbanization trends. These parallel evolutions present a unique opportunity to study urban growth patterns in the Arab region. Urbanization, if well guided, represents a driver for sustainable development. The alternative is a chaotic evolution of towns and cities that would hinder prosperity and social integration. The *Arab Urban Agenda* reflects the efforts of the countries of the region toward the former. In this context, UN-Habitat actively supports the Arab Urban Agenda through ROAS and in close collaboration with Member States. The vision of enhanced environmental, economic and social policies that will ensure sustainable urban development and better living standards for all, including the most disadvantaged, has been instrumental in the formulation of this document. Our cooperation has sought to coordinate urban actors in the Arab region and support systemic urban policy formulation, advocacy, and implementation and monitoring, leading up to Habitat III in 2016 and beyond.

In this regard, I commend the process in many of the Arab countries soliciting citizen participation, through National Urban Forums, National Habitat Committees and the preparation of National Habitat III Reports, which seeks to deepen the ownership of the transformative and people-centered *Arab Urban Agenda*. UN-Habitat's partnership with LAS to strengthen the implementation of the *Sustainable Development Agenda 2030*, especially Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 - to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and to advocate for a prosperous Arab society - is also laudable.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the *Arab Urban Agenda* report, prepared in parallel with the discussions on the *New Urban Agenda*, to articulate a shared view of the Arab region towards Habitat III. Building on the core pillars of the *Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030*, and seeking structural transformation within the Arab region, this document assesses the progress in managing recent urban transformations in Arab countries and addresses the rising urban challenges. The *Arab Urban Agenda* is a crucial contribution of the region to the *New Urban Agenda*. By integrating productive urbanization with macro-economic planning and feeding them into regional integration, the *Arab Urban Agenda* gives all of us much hope and energy for urban transformation in the region.

Joan Clos
Under-Secretary General and Executive Director
United Nations Human Settlements Programme

The vision for housing and urban development in the Arab region is dedicated to ensure that **"integrated and sustainable human settlements are resilient, competitive, and provide for a better quality of life for all in the Arab region"**. Objectives to achieve this vision include access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services; achieve prosperity, attain equity in development and social integration; plan integrated and sustainable human settlements in all Arab states; implement principles of good urban governance and build capacities to plan and manage human settlements; improve urban environmental sustainability; enhance adaptive capacity to climate change and protection of natural resources; boost the productivity of cities to achieve economic growth and sustainable development on the national and regional levels.
(Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030)

Cairo, Egypt. The Greater Cairo Region is the Arab world's largest extended metropolitan region.
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Currently, an unprecedented opportunity is provided for member states of the United Nations and their populations to shape the urban future of the 21st Century. Every country, every member of civil society and the private sector, along with their governments, is expected to engage vigorously on the state of urbanization in their country, determining what needs to be done to achieve transformative outcomes over the next 20 years.

This report is a resource for citizens and governments in the Arab region as they utilize the opportunity that the Habitat III process opens up. More specifically, the report aims to strengthen Habitat Agenda Partners and other non-state actors in the Arab region in their policy dialogues and capacity-building processes. The report is designed to inform and enrich national level engagements across the Arab region on advancing an Arab Urban Agenda.

The report puts the agenda of Habitat III in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the SDG framework[1] (September 2015), the Conference of the Parties (COP), signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change[2] (December 2015) and the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development[3]

(May 2016). Building on ideas and policies that stem from Habitat I in 1976 and Habitat II in 1996, the urban vision for the Arab region is summarized in the LAS formulated Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030.

The SDG agenda is striving to extend the work of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to eliminate extreme poverty and create a development framework that can see more inclusive and sustainable patterns of growth. It explicitly confronts the fact that the current model of extractive growth violates the limits of the global natural resource base and therefore requires 'a radical shift towards more sustainable patterns of consumption, production and resource use. It also recognizes that poverty cannot be disconnected from inequality, which speaks to inequitable access to power and resources globally, regionally, within countries and at local level.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda focus on natural resource limits is also confronted through the debate on climate change, which reaches an important milestone at the Paris (COP 21). With the growing awareness that cities are central to the overall global

effort to address climate variability. There is universal acknowledgement that the current model of economic growth is unsustainable. A new path has to be found that is more environmentally sustainable, socially just and economically inclusive.

The world community is on the edge of a paradigm change in mainstreaming development thinking and practice, in general and its cities in particular. The movement towards a shared Arab perspective on these global debates is vital and this was reflected in the elaboration of the Cairo Declaration on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, the outcome document of the AMFHUD1 (December 2015). It refers to both, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Habitat III, hereby outlining the Arab position to a universal New Urban Agenda.

It is anticipated that this will be addressed through the SDGs, the respective "Urban Goal" and other relevant targets, imperative to action at the local level and city scale where the complex challenges of development meet and are concentrated. It is with this global opportunity in mind that the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030 outlines a vision for the Arab region and takes concrete steps for its implementation and monitoring. Its main objectives for implementation are:

1. Ensuring access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and prosperous living for all.

2. Ensuring equity and social integration.
3. Planning integrated and sustainable human settlements in all states in the Arab region.
4. Applying the principles of good urban management, and capacity building for planning and managing human settlements.
5. Improving urban environmental sustainability and resilience against climate change, and preserving natural resources.
6. Enhancing cities productivity to achieve economic growth and sustainable development at the national and regional levels.

The Habitat III will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented document, which shall reinvigorate the global commitment to and support for housing and sustainable urban development and the implementation of a New Urban Agenda. The Arab preparations and positioning for Habitat III provides an excellent opportunity to project ideas on how inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and towns can unlock the region's potential.

First, it is important to consider what the Habitat Agenda involves and what the specificities of the Arab urban condition are. By considering material conditions on the ground, future trends and normative imperatives for sustainable urban development, the specific priorities of an Arab Urban Agenda will be clarified for analysis, debate and common action.

[1] UN. 2030. Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20%21252030Agenda20%for20%Sustainable20%Development20%web.pdf

[2] UNFCC. 2015. Historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change. http://newsroom.uanfccc.int/unfccc-newsroom/finale-cop21/

[3] UNESCWA. 2016. Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. https://www.unescwa.org/arab-forum-sustainable-development2016-

1-   Arab Urbanization:

Trends and Prospects

1.1.   Housing, Basic Services and Infrastructure

The housing, basic services and infrastructure sector are considered to be one of the key areas in achieving sustainable urban development.It requires effective and feasible policies and strategies that enable adequate housing for all and sustainable urban development in the Arab region.This is emphasized in the Arab Charter on Human Rights which states in its 38th Article, "Every person has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, which ensures their well-being and a decent life, including food, clothing, housing, services and the right to a healthy environment. The States parties shall take the necessary measures commensurate with their resources to guarantee these rights".

Accordingly, some Arab countries have made significant progress in increasing the supply of affordable housing, and eradicating informal and poor areas through upgrading and resettlement programs, implemented in partnership by public institutions and the private sector.

In general, the supply of formal housing for low and middle income categories has decreased in many Arab countries as a result of the absence of adequate housing finance mechanisms for all income levels, in addition to the limited capacity of public private partnerships to provide adequate housing, the increasing housing prices owing to the imbalance between supply and growing demand, compounded by the rising speculation, lengthy and exorbitant property registration process and legal barriers to mortgage lending. In consequence, the constant population increase drives urban pressures to hazardous or unsafe areas or substandard buildings.

At the same time, social housing programs have been criticized in some countries for being located far away from employment opportunities, basic, commercial and public services, with insufficient public transport and incomplete facilities.

In most Arab countries, governments encounter the challenge of providing urban basic services and infrastructure to sustain the increasing urbanization trends.

Cities lack recourses and management capacities to cope with the growing demand for drinking water and sanitation, energy, public transport, public facilities, healthcare and education facilities, mostly manifested in rural areas.
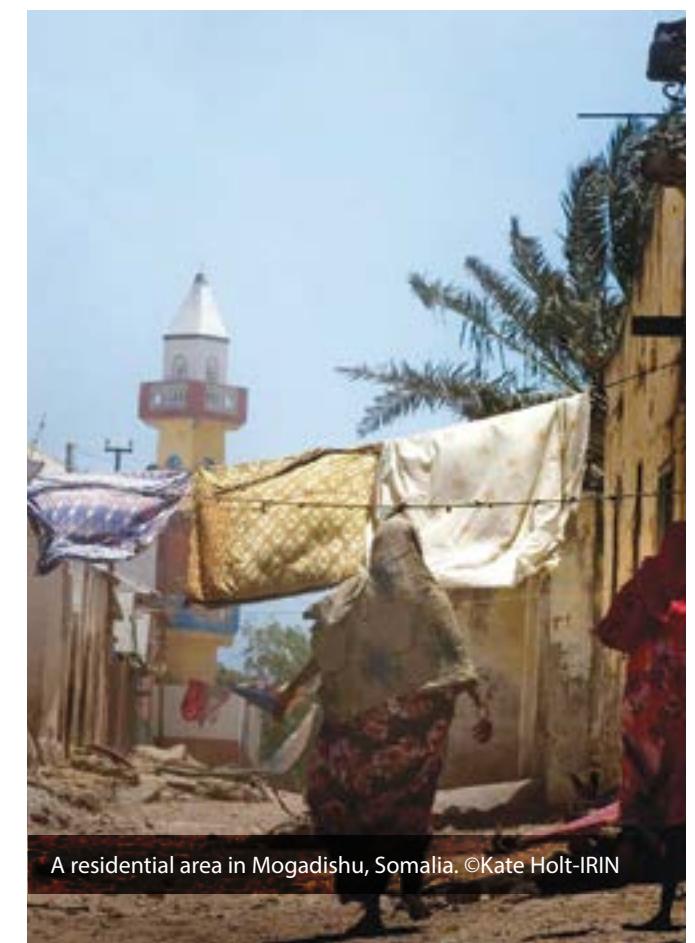
Social Housing in Arab countries

Arab countries seek to ensure the right to adequate, safe and healthy housing for their citizens in order to preserve human dignity and achieve social justice. In this context, a number of social housing projects were implemented in order to provide subsidized housing units and small plots of land for low and low middle-income families in new urban areas through a funding mechanism that takes into account the limited state budget.

To do so, legislations were issued to identify funding sources, and prosecute people convicted of social housing fraud (tenants who have access to more than one unit, unlawful commercial use of units, unqualified as per the eligibility requirements…). Social housing areas are located within the urban approved areas for cities and remote villages, far from dangerous and unsafe areas and nearby places of public services and equipped with basic facilities. Also, the location should be vacant and directly linked to existing road networks. Miscellaneous ownership patterns (such as ownership, rental arrangements) are available to suit the financial viability of the different social segments and take into account the low-income and other vulnerable groups based on the principle of non-discrimination.

A residential area in Mogadishu, Somalia. ©Kate Holt-IRIN

Key issues:

Inability of the public sector to meet the growing needs for adequate and affordable housing. Increase in the costs of serviced land, prepared for housing construction. Lack of housing finance mechanisms. Inconsistency between access to basic services and international planning standards. Increasing gap between the demand and supply of housing for low-income groups in addition to scarce distribution of units. Lack of housing stock management system to ensure maintenance and utilisation of all units. Lack of an integrated approach to housing and employment opportunities. Lack of provision of housing for middle and low income groups by the private sector. Weak partnership between public and private sector in providing infrastructure. Disbursed housing unit ownership pattern, alongside limited safe and affordable rental stock. High price for construction materials and limited application of state-of-the-art and sustainable building technologies. Inadequate access of wider population to safe water and sanitation. Lack of efficient and adequate public transport and road networks.

1.2.   Urban Demographics

Some Arab states set strategies to dedicate investments to secondary and new cities in order to improve urban-rural linkages and achieve equitable economic development across the country. However, uneven development persists as a major challenge facing most countries of the region, given the limited effects of official rural development plans. Most of the urban dwellers in Arab states live in major urban communities that offer job opportunities and social services, resulting in rural-urban migration, hereby moving from small cities to medium and larger cities.

Social transformations and uneven economic development have led to an increase in labor migration within and across the Arab countries, in addition to displacement induced by man-made and natural causes such as political instability or climatic conditions, as well as foreign occupation, the degradation of security in numerous Arab and neighboring countries.

Growing urbanization rates and the imbalance in the distribution of population density as well as immigration within and across countries is one of the triggers of emerging informal settlements at the urban peripheries, often encroaching on agricultural land. Moreover, social inequality is a challenge across the region, mostly aggregating in Arab cities. It is reflected in high levels of unemployment, especially amongst

females, the marginalization elderly, persons with disabilities, and the limited education options for

An Aerial View of the Za'atri Refugee Camp ©Jordan M P I C

low-income groups due to irregular government expenditure in the education sector.

With approximately 60 per cent of the population below the age of 25, most Arab countries have not been able to adequately address the issue of generating employment opportunities for youth, widely due to the lack of resources and supporting mechanisms, besides exclusion of youth from decision-making processes. Hence, strengthening the role of youth as a development partner should be reconsidered in order to empower them to participate in development processes and decrease the negative effects, such as the spread of violence and terrorism. Furthermore, the role of women in development is to be encouraged.

A displaced family carries aid material in a sponge bed in an IDP camp in Abu Ghriab area, western Baghdad. ©Contributor-IRIN

IDP Camp in Basra, Iraq ©ImarIskan.gov.iq

Refugees and displacement impact in the Arab region

Recently, many Arab countries have witnessed unprecedented flows of forced migration and displacement caused by political or economic conditions, affecting their living standards and increasing their burden as host countries, in terms of maintaining sustainable economic growth for their local citizens and providing protection and decent living for refugees. Shelter is among the most important people's needs. Most of the arriving refugees reside in unsafe areas straining the already scarce resources of the receiving countries or risk to jeopardize their development efforts.

In this regard, the international community should provide more assistance to the host countries to help them to compensate for the negative consequences and costs incurred by these large concentrations of refugees. Efforts should also be extended to putting an end to the rising conflicts in the region that affect the living standards of their societies and finding lasting solutions to the refugees problems.

Key issues:

Imbalance in population density distribution. Increase in rural-urban immigration. Displacement caused by occupation, security issues, and natural and man-made disasters. Limited women and youth contribution to development processes. Inequitable development between rural and urban areas. Increasing poverty rates in urban areas. High rates of population growth.

1.3. Land and Planning

A number of Arab countries have implemented an inclusive and integrated approach for the planning of new cities as a driver for economic development, hereby linking housing to employment and provide sustainable transportation solutions by applying a metropolitan planning approach. Moreover, countries have attempted the preparation of strategic development plans for cities with thorough consultation of development partners. In order to achieve local development objectives, the empowerment of civil society organizations and increased participation of the private sector is vital in the implementation of neighbourhood, urban and regional plans, hereby also taking into account historical and archaeological sites. Research in some countries revealed the need to link economic planning with spatial planning, urban management and the planning for the provision of basic services. The discrepancy between the institutional structures and the theoretical curricula for sustainable urban planning remains problematic. Frequently, Arab countries lack integrated systems for land and property management, ensuring affordability of land prices

and protection of natural resources against hazardous encroachment on agricultural land.

Informal settlement in Bagdad, Iraq. ©ImarIskan.gov.iq

LAS, in its Charter on Human Rights (Article 31, 2004), states that "everyone has a guaranteed right to own private property, and shall not under any circumstances be arbitrarily or unlawfully divested of all or any part of his property". With the horizontal expansion of urban communities, population density decreases, class stratification increases as the low-income people settle in informal and slum areas, often lacking formal tenure security, basic services and adequate infrastructure.

Key issues:
Spreading out of larger cities. Diminishing of agricultural land as a result of unplanned urban growth. Urban deprivation. Spread of slums and informal areas. Lack of conservation of archaeological and heritage sites. High land prices. Deterioration of historic neighbourhoods. Lack of national and regional plans in some countries.

Informal Housing, Algiers, Algeria. ©Mhuv.gov.dz

Housing for informal dwellers relocation, Algiers. ©Mhuv.gov.dz

Unplanned neighborhoods in Arab countries

Slums and unplanned neighborhoods are a global urban phenomenon, consisting of various forms, patterns and scales. In some Arab countries, unplanned neighbourhoods or informal settlements are mostly characterized by lack of public facilities and services, inaccessibility given by its narrow streets and environmental and social degradation. Among the slums areas observed in the region, we can identify severely deteriorated neighborhoods (huts, shanties ...) or illegal substandard neighborhoods built on private or unlawfully occupied land.

In the framework of the efforts of Arab governments to eradicate poverty and exclusion in urban areas and promote social integration, many have sought to implement national strategies to address the problem of housing through a holistic, participatory and gradual approach. This included preparing an inventory and classification of high-risk areas as a priority according to their degree of risks. Dwellers will be relocated to new and improved neighborhoods well connected to public services and utilities. Among the good practices in Arab countries, we can cite for example, but not limited to, "Villes sans bidonvilles (Cities without Slums)" program, applied in the Kingdom of Morocco since 2004; the "Informal Settlements Development Facility", founded in Egypt in 2008; the five-year plan to eliminate slums in Algeria since 2007, and finally, the National Program for Slum Rehabilitation implemented by the Republic of Iraq.

1.4. Urban Administration and Legislation

The absence of institutional and legislative structures in many Arab countries is one of the reasons for the increase of unplanned urban growth, particularly due to limited coordination between different line ministries and institutions relevant to urban development, both at the central and local levels. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of local authorities in line with enhanced decentralization are still restrained. Typically, central technical bodies in Arab states develop urban policies and plans while local authorities are mandated to implement local plans only. The latter generally lack necessary human resources to plan and manage urban growth. Local authorities rely on funds from central or regional governments in order to finance their investments and activities. This leads to the partial erosion of benefits participatory local administration is meant to provide. The insufficient availability of accurate and comparable data for measuring urban development trends at the regional level confines the implementation of regional development visions. Moreover, it is required to enhance the analysis of data for support in the decision-making processes. A further challenge includes the inadequate urban and construction related legislation and the application to the changing urban context in the Arab region, in addition to the weak institutional capacities and financial resources of respective entities as well as the lack of monitoring and supervision capacities of local administration.

Urbanization under occupation

Israeli occupation did not affect daily life of Palestinians only. It had negative repercussions on their ability to develop and implement long-term plans and strategies to achieve the basic objectives of "shelter for all" and "sustainable human settlements" stated in of Habitat II agenda, Such effects can be classified into four groups:

1. Restrictions and physical obstacles imposed on Palestinian growth, including the construction of illegal settlements, the separation barrier, the annexation of East Jerusalem and related checkpoints and barriers in the West Bank, and the blockage imposed on Gaza Strip.
2. Full Israeli control over the so-called area "C" representing more than 60% of West Bank and all its natural resources, in addition to the border crossings.
3. Legal and administrative obstacles which include the building permit system in East Jerusalem and the area "C", and restrictions on taxation of Palestinian imports.
4. Deliberate and systematic destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, including demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and West Bank and repeated military attacks on Gaza Strip.

Sana'a, Yemen, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. ©Oleg Znamenskiy-Shutterstock

Key issues:
Poor coordination and connection between the different sectors in development and urban planning. Poor monitoring and enforcement of legislation. Planning legislations lagging behind urban developments. Limited coverage of urban, housing and environmental observatories, and weak information management. Limited application of participatory approach in urban and construction related legislation and urban planning systems. Importance of enacting legislation for urban planning and sustainable building systems. Sustainability aspects not taken into consideration in urban legislation, construction laws and urban planning systems. Lack of trained calibres in urban and environment fields.

1.5. Environmental and Urban Sustainability and Climate Change

Environmental awareness has not been widely spread across the Arab region, echoing in poor response to international environmental standards.

Furthermore, there is a lack and weak enforcement of environmental legislations and regulations for the protection of natural environment and biodiversity.

Water scarcity is also threatening the Arab region as it has the least water resources per capita in the world. Groundwater reserves and aquifers are depleted at alarming rates, while the climate change induced sea level rise could affect cities located in low laying coastal areas. The temperature increase caused by the climate change may also decrease precipitation and aggravate water scarcity and severe droughts, with adverse impact on agricultural production, in addition to water scarcity and desertification impacting on food security.

Although greenhouse emissions in the Arab Region are not more than 4.8% of the total world emissions and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are still limited in the Arab region, the reduction of emissions is being addressed by diversifying energy sources and the utilization of renewable sources.

This is in line with the joint responsibility principle. Nevertheless, Arab countries face challenges extended by industrialization, population growth, and based on wealthier societies the increase in individual transportation.

This is aggravated by poor public transport and ageing vehicles in some countries. Energy consumption has also increased as a result of population and economic growth, industrial development, rising standards of living and urbanization, with no sufficient generation of clean energy, or utilization of local and environmentally sustainable building materials. Besides, the absence of an integrated system for solid waste and wastewater collection, treatment and safe disposal in a number of Arab states has led to health and environmental problems.

Pollution in the Nile River.
©Moh.gov.eg

Flooding in Sudan. ©Ashrad .Shazly-AFP-Getty

Key issues:
Desertification and water scarcity. Limited reliance on new and renewable energy sources. Limited awareness of climate change impact on cities. Poor participation of the private sector in the environment field. Lack of an integrated system for the collection and treatment of hazardous and solid waste. Inadequate disaster risk reduction systems. Water and air pollution. Alarming depletion of natural resources. Poor response to international environmental standards or localization of eco-friendly technologies.

1.6. Productivity and Urban Economy

Arab countries have undertaken coherent national policies to enhance the competitiveness of cities as engines of economic growth, with emphasis on secondary cities to alleviate pressure on primary cities.

All Arab governments recognize the importance of the city as a magnet for investment and a source of job creation and poverty alleviation.

Moreover, many Arab cities have promoted their potential as destinations for international tourism based on their natural and cultural heritage assets, and their role as education hubs, scientific research centers or financial capitals. Cultural heritage initiatives seek to reinforce the cultural identity of Arab cities and maximize the cultural tourism potential to generate economic growth and create jobs.

Drawing on these investments will boost city competitiveness and contribute significantly to economic growth and job creation. However, poor organization and management of infrastructure and housing projects, in addition to urban sprawl, is changing the landscape of Arab cities at the expense of cultural and natural heritage.

Even though recent economic growth rates in a number of Arab countries have exceeded the global average, national economies are currently highly non-diversified. Furthermore, the political instability in the region, and insecurity are affecting foreign direct investment. Arab states are incapable of providing employment opportunities for large sections of the population. Hence, employment became a strategic objective for most countries, with a focus on youth, as there is often a mismatch between educational qualifications of young graduates and available opportunities within the labor market. The informal sector represents one of the sources for employment if adequately integrated in formal systems. Still, low property registration rates and high levels of informality have prevented local authorities and central governments from deriving property related resources.

The economic dependency on natural resources, especially oil and gas as well as the reliance on imported food imports and global food chains, increases the vulnerability of the region to economic shocks given the fluctuations in international prices; with severe repercussions on employment, economic growth and stability and the environment. This, in turn, affects the housing sector.

At the regional level, regional trade and economic complementarity are weak, as well as technical and financial regional cooperation.

Women working in agriculture Egypt.©UNHabitat

Key issues:
Inefficient utilization of available resources. Poor economic diversification. Growth of the informal economy with no proper government consideration. Poor trade and economic integration. High unemployment rates, especially among females and youth. Limited developmental role of the private sector. Mismatch between graduate qualifications and employment market.

2- Conceptual Frame

Sustainable Urban Development in the Arab Region

This chapter builds on the objectives adopted by the Arab strategy for housing and sustainable urban development to be reached by 2030 to portray the vision of the Arab region regarding future patterns of sustainable urban development, taking into account the cultural, economic, social, urban and environmental specificities of each country and the characteristics of its cities and communities. The strategy included six objectives, each of which is divided into a set of goals and strategies proposed to be implemented in the short term, medium and long terms.
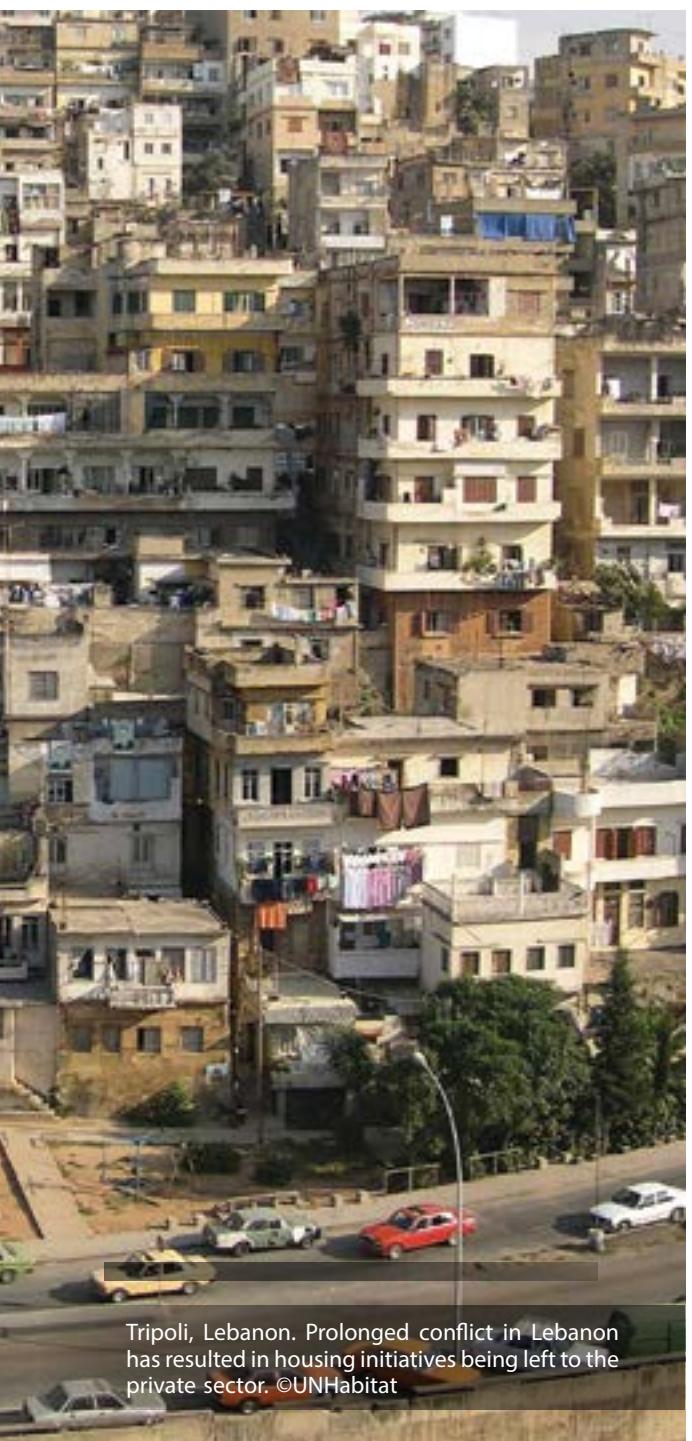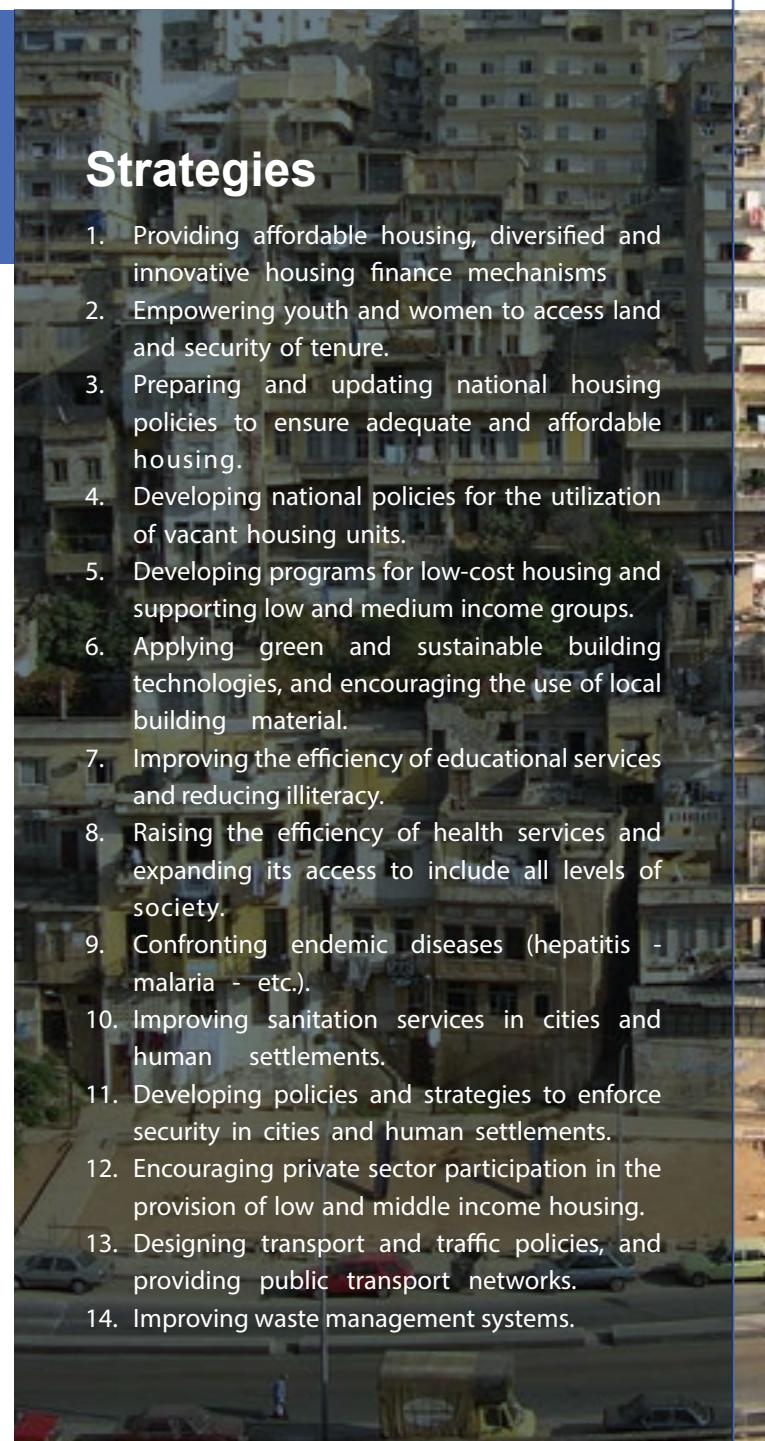
Objective 1
Ensuring access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and prosperous living for all.

Goals:
1. Facilitate access to adequate and sustainable housing for all economic groups.
2. Provide and upgrade basic services.
3. Provide and upgrade the management of infrastructure and facilities, and encouraging the participation of the private sector.
4. Provide the necessary support to construct and finance housing through innovative and sustainable methods.
5. Provide safe public transport networks within cities and their extensions.
6. Apply public health principles in Arab human settlements.
7. Ensure safety and security for communities.

Strategies
1. Providing affordable housing, diversified and innovative housing finance mechanisms
2. Empowering youth and women to access land and security of tenure.
3. Preparing and updating national housing policies to ensure adequate and affordable housing.
4. Developing national policies for the utilization of vacant housing units.
5. Developing programs for low-cost housing and supporting low and medium income groups.
6. Applying green and sustainable building technologies, and encouraging the use of local building material.
7. Improving the efficiency of educational services and reducing illiteracy.
8. Raising the efficiency of health services and expanding its access to include all levels of society.
9. Confronting endemic diseases (hepatitis - malaria - etc.).
10. Improving sanitation services in cities and human settlements.
11. Developing policies and strategies to enforce security in cities and human settlements.
12. Encouraging private sector participation in the provision of low and middle income housing.
13. Designing transport and traffic policies, and providing public transport networks.
14. Improving waste management systems.

Tripoli, Lebanon. Prolonged conflict in Lebanon has resulted in housing initiatives being left to the private sector. ©UNHabitat
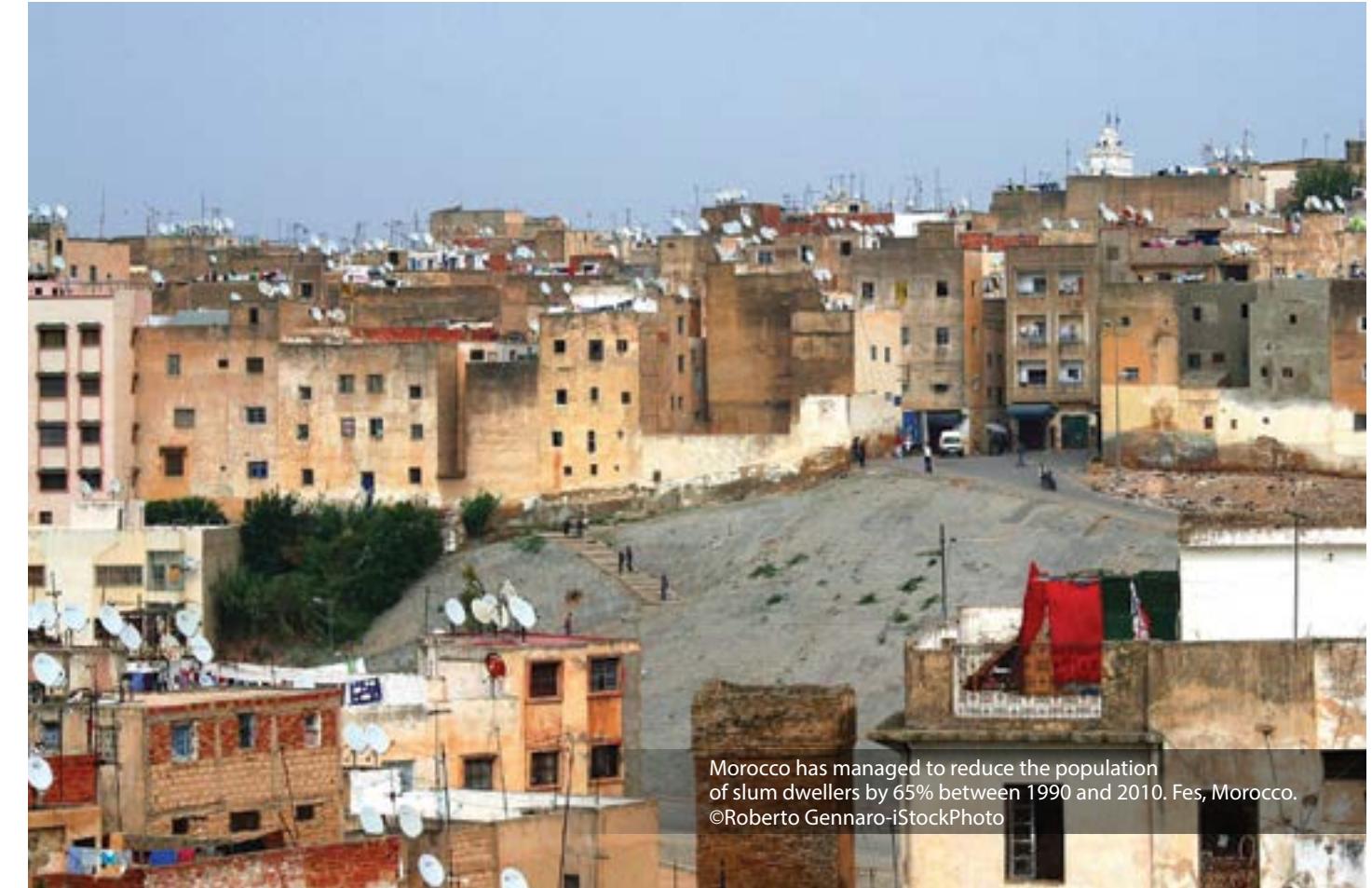
Objective 2
Ensuring equity and social integration.

Goals:
1. Achieve balanced rural-urban development.
2. Empower all community groups to participate in development processes (including vulnerable groups, with a focus on women, youth, children, elderly and people with special needs).
3. Manage migration, displacement and refugee status data in order to address integration in cities and human settlements and make adequate resources available.

Morocco has managed to reduce the population
of slum dwellers by 65% between 1990 and 2010. Fes, Morocco.
©Roberto Gennaro-iStockPhoto

Strategies
1. Increasing support and raising the efficiency of services in rural areas to reduce rural-urban migration.
2. Providing job opportunities outside the primary cities to reduce rural-urban migration.
3. Endorsing the efforts of Arab governments to empower all levels of society to participate in management and decision-making for development processes.
4. Implementing economic and social empowerment policies, encouraging active participation of civil society organization in development processes.
5. Considering rural areas in the national urban policies.
6. Mapping social marginalization and urban vulnerability at the national level to take into account the relevant urban areas.

Urban Development in Amman, Jordan.
©Andy Clarke-Shutterstock

Objective 3

Planning integrated and sustainable human settlements in all states in the Arab region.

Goals:

1. Maximize benefits to the Arab region regionally and internationally. Based on its strategic location.
2. Exploit uninhabited areas in the development process.
3. Balance the hierarchical structure of human settlements at national levels.
4. Reduce the expansion of slums and informal areas, and upgrade existing ones.
5. Develop neighbourhoods and districts according to sustainable urbanization standards.
6. Provide open and safe public spaces, and set planning and design standards respectively.
7. Develop inclusive plans for cities to achieve green development requirements and quality of life.

Strategies

1. Formulating national policies for the development of land, cities and regions.
2. Identifying mechanisms for the implementation of plans.
3. Stimulating the provision of serviced land to all and create linkage to plans and employment opportunities.
4. Supporting and implementing slum upgrading programs by applying participatory approaches.
5. Developing plans for medium and small cities and villages.
6. Developing urban expansion plans and increasing density in the planned extensions.
7. Re-organizing land for cities' expansion and the development of residential areas.
8. Planning centrally and implementing locally with the participation of civil society.
9. Linking funding mechanisms to strategic spatial plans.
10. Increasing public and open spaces in existing and new cities

Neighborhood in East Jerusalem. ©UNHabitat

Objective 4

Applying the principles of good urban management, and capacity building for planning and managing human settlements.

Goals:

1. Provide and manage information and data
2. Enhance legislation, regulatory structures and supporting systems for housing and urban development institutions
3. Ensure effective cooperation and coordination among administration levels, with the community participation
4. Implement decentralization in financing cities and local communities, as required.
5. Extend capacity building and training to local authorities in the field of implementation and monitoring of plans.

Strategies

1. Finalizing the Arab Urban Observatories system and establishing a Regional Observatory for Housing and Urban Development to support information management.
2. Building technical capacities of municipalities through expertise exchange in housing and urban development.
3. Establishing an integrated system for capacity building and human development in the field of housing and urban development at the local, national and regional levels.
4. Strengthening local revenue generation and financial management.
5. Enhancing legislation and assessment systems related to housing and urbanization.
6. Reviewing, updating and evaluating planning regulations and institutional structures.
7. Managing land at the city scale to ensure better distribution of services and optimal use of land.
8. Training professionals on sustainable and energy saving building technologies.
9. Providing legislative and institutional frameworks in support of decision-making for development processes.
10. Coordinating the support of donors for the implementation of strategic projects and initiatives.
11. Supporting Arab professional organizations and research institutions in the field of housing and urban development to exchange expertise and skills.
12. Monitoring the progress of housing and urban development in the Arab region by utilizing the City Prosperity Index.
13. Designing technical education and university curricula in urban planning and management in line with the developments in sustainable building technology.

Objective 5

Improving urban environmental sustainability and resilience against climate change, and preserving natural resources.

Goals:

1. Apply appropriate technologies to the conservation of environment in accordance with international standards.
2. Expand the use of new and renewable energy resources and eco-friendly technologies.
3. Reduce carbon dioxide emissions, and the ecological footprint of urbanization.
4. Develop contingency plans for disaster response, reducing urban environmental risks and enhance preparedness.

In Tunisia the port of Sousse has been upgraded to help stimulate investment.
©Marcin Ciesielski-iStockPhoto

Strategies

1. Spreading awareness about environmental issues and the effects of climate change on urban communities, especially in the building sector.
2. Supporting projects to increase the energy efficiency of buildings through the participation of the private sector.
3. Giving priority to the protection of communities and buildings at risk (floods, landslides, etc.)
4. Committing to solid waste sorting as a first stage in the reuse and recycling system.
5. Evaluating and delimiting urban environmental risks, and developing contingency plans for urban risks.
6. Raising the efficiency of response to urban risks.
7. Increasing the reliance on eco-friendly public transportation.
8. Inventing new approaches to improve solid waste management in the cities.
9. Enhancing laws and regulations regarding biodiversity protection.
10. Providing institutional and legislative framework for disaster risk management, including financial means for mitigation.
11. Activating Arab Regional Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production approved in 2009, especially the relevant sections regarding housing and sustainable urban development.
12. Activating Arab Framework Action Plan on Climate Change approved in 2012.
13. Activating Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction approved in 2014.

Objective 6

Enhancing cities productivity to achieve economic growth and sustainable development at the national and regional levels.

Goals:

1. Optimize the utilization of available resources in an integrated manner nationally and regionally.
2. Encourage the participation of private sector in development.
3. Support and encourage scientific research and development in support of productivity.
4. Provide job opportunities and reducing unemployment.
5. Foster reliance on principles of green economy to enhance productivity.
6. Empower all levels of society to improve its economic status and livelihood base.
7. Improve local funding for municipalities, and transform frozen assets into economic engines.
8. Make cities more attractive and productive, aiming at achieving an advanced rank in the Global City Index.
9. Encourage sustainable industrial development in Arab states.

Qatar. Housing finance in Gulf countries is dictated by Shari'a law. ©Komar-Shutterstock

Strategies

1. Encouraging local economic diversity.
2. Preparing green economy strategies, policies and initiatives.
3. Facilitating the effective allocation of limited national resources as per respective priorities.
4. Providing legislations and incentives to encourage the participation of the private sector in the development.
5. Providing and exchanging opportunities for researchers and innovators to apply the scientific research outputs in Arab states.
6. Encouraging environmentally and socially responsible investment, develop regulations and policies for sustainable investment.
7. Taking inventory and classification of resources at the national level to utilize them at the regional level.
8. Matching the qualifications of graduates with job opportunities at national and regional levels.
9. Linking urban development with economic strategies of each Arab country.
10. Integrating the Arab region with the global system as an inclusive development network in order to attract investments to promote development.

3- Institutional Framework

to optimize the Arab Urban Future

Those who live in and manage Arab cities and human settlements need to drive the global and regional conversation about what sustainable urban development means in practice. Furthermore, the real-life innovations to achieve sustainable urbanism will come from the ground and cascade upwards. Technocratic top-down programmes and solutions will not work because each city and town is unique and will need to draw on the collective resources of all actors affected to produce fit-for-purpose reforms. That said, local innovations become a lot easier if there is a coherent and high profile national programme of deliberation and action to drive systematic urban transformation. National governments have substantial political, institutional and fiscal resources that can stimulate and enable urban innovation. In this section we summarize the minimum elements of a national urban policy system, led by national governments in close partnership with the relevant local government association, civil society organizations, and private sector as well as knowledge institutions. The following suite of institutions is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for effective urban management and transformation.

Local action, experimentation and learning that is supported by a broader national system that is sensitive to the imperatives of the changes accompanied by urbanization and urban growth will contribute to solving national and city challenges.

In fact, even though it might appear as if there is a natural hierarchy of national urban policies shaping local actions, in most contexts it is more likely and desirable that there is a dynamic interplay between national indicative policies and locally defined priorities that feed into the national agenda

In order to leverage the transformative power of urbanization, the tools for implementing the New Urban Agenda are highlighted as follows:

Urban Rules and Regulations.
The outcomes in terms of quality of an urban settlement is dependent on the set of rules and regulations and its implementation. Proper urbanization requires the rule of law.

Urban Planning and Design.
Establishing the adequate provision of common goods, including streets and open spaces, together with an efficient pattern of buildable plots.

Municipal Finance
For a good management and maintenance of the city, local fiscal systems should redistribute parts of the urban value generated.
Those are to be considered in relation to:

National Urban Policies
These establish a connection between the dynamics of urbanization and the overall process of national development.
(Reference: https://www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda, visited on 25 April 2016)

Dubai's impressive road network. ©Philip Lange-Shutterstock

3.1. Legislative Reform Agenda[4]

Even though, Arab states possess well elaborated legal systems, many are outdated and do not reflect the challenges that countries are facing today, particularly in the housing and urban development sectors. Moreover, there is a need for capacity development at all levels of government, ranging from the national to the local levels. A systematic review of legal frameworks has been widely acknowledged, and countries have commenced to address deficiencies.

As many Arab states face similar challenges, more collaboration is recommended in the field of sharing and comparing legislation, harmonizing legal terminology (especially related to urban planning) and study exchanges, hereby exploring legal instruments in practice. Due to the historical influence of British and French legislative systems in addition to customary

laws widely applied across the Arab region, further exploration of how these legislations have evolved and interrelate is recommended. Moreover, the peer-to-peer learning from other regions and countries is encouraged. The following recommendations have been endorsed by urban legislative experts from a wide range of Arab countries:

1. Urban planning law should not be a constraint to urban development, rather it should guide appropriate urban growth. It should be transparent and in its conception ought to engage the wider public and all key stakeholders concerned. It is strongly encouraged to avoid overlaps in legislation that are mutually exclusive.
2. Enhance capacity building for key stakeholders at national and local to implement and enforce legislation.

[4]Findings of the Expert Group Meeting on Urban Planning Laws in Arab States that took place from 19 - 20 October 2015 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates have been considered in the elaboration of this chapter.

Cairo, Egypt. ©UNHabitat

3. Unify legal terminology across the Arab region.
4. Introduce more flexibility for local governments in terms of decision making for urban planning, related local fees and procedures to enforce regulations.
5. Clarify respective authorities and responsibilities related to public space. Produce regulation that requires periodic monitoring of public space creation and maintenance.
6. Better coordinate urban planning at local level as a

priority to improve land management, in addition to updating cadastral systems.
7. Urban planning law to relate to the community, to neighborhood spaces and local activities, while considering socio-economic conditions of particular populations.
8. Standardize output of each urban planning level, to be utilized as input to the next urban planning level (from local to national and national to local levels).

3.2. Urban Planning and Design Reform Agenda[5]

In order for Arab cities to fully expand their potential as drivers of national economic growth, enhanced urban and territorial planning is vital, particularly in terms of decision-making for realizing economic, social, cultural and environmental goals through the development of spatial visions, strategies and plans. Moreover, the application of policy principles, tools, institutional and participatory mechanisms and regulatory procedures is important. It is widely acknowledged that the forms and functions of Arab cities and their respective hinterlands is significant in generating economic growth, prosperity and employment, the improvement of the quality of life in existing and new urban settlements for all.

A reform agenda for urban planning and design in the Arab region is to take into consideration multi-scale spatial planning, ranging from the regional and national levels to the very local level.

Arab regional level:
multi-country strategies to direct investment to climate change and energy efficiency, enable integrated development of cross-border areas, mitigate natural risks and improve sustainable management of shared natural resources.

National level:
national plans to take advantage of existing and planned economic poles and large infrastructure projects in order to support and structure the system of cities to fully unleash their economic potential.

City-region and metropolitan level:
subnational regional plans to foster economic development by promoting economies of scale and agglomeration, increasing productivity and prosperity, strengthening urban-rural linkages and adaptation to

The 25 km King Fahd Causeway linking Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. ©Mohamed Ghuloom.

climate change impacts, reducing disaster risks and intensity energy use, addressing social and spatial disparities and promoting territorial cohesion and complementarities.

City and municipal level:
(1) city development strategies and integrated development plans to prioritize investment decisions and encourage synergies between urban areas, (2) land-use plans to contribute to environmental protection and regulate land markets. (3) urban extension and infill plans to minimize transport and service delivery costs, optimize land use and support protection and organization of open spaces. (4) urban upgrading plans to increase residential and economic densities, and promote more socially integrated communities.

Neighborhood level:
street development and public space plans to improve urban quality, social cohesion and inclusion. Design public space with provision of appropriate street patterns and connectivity, allocation of open spaces, layout of buildable, compact and mixed-use plots to facilitate an improved social mix and interaction, hereby enhancing cultural aspects.

[5]UN-Habitat. 2015. International Guidelines on Urban & Territorial Planning. http://unhabitat.org/books/international-guidelines-on-urban-and-territorial-planning/#

3.3.   Municipal Finance Reform Agenda

Arab countries widely acknowledge the importance of fostering the diversification of national development policies in order to address regional and urban disparities to harness the economic potential of cities as part of national economies. This includes the promotion of economic development in secondary cities, new towns and development corridors, hereby strengthening connectivity between primary and secondary cities, urban-rural and territorial linkages.

The implementation of National Urban Policies in addition to regional and urban development plans is imperative and builds on a financial plan, considering a realistic income plan and expenditure provision at national and local government levels in order to ensure inclusive, sustainable, resilient and safe urbanization in the Arab region.

Regulatory and legislative frameworks are vital in the promotion of inclusive planning systems and effective financial management that enables local governments to plan, mobilize and use financial resources efficiently, with increased transparency and accountability to all inhabitants and stakeholders. Predictable, secured and substantial sources of revenue should be mobilized for local governments to support services and infrastructure at the level required for long-term urban economic development. In particular, they are to be empowered to generate local revenue, building for instance on property transactions and innovative approaches to leverage remittances.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships should be developed together with enhancing the capacity of local and national governments to work with the private sector, academic institutions, and community development partners in formulating and implementing local economic development strategies. Arab states in post-conflict environments ought to recognize physical reconstruction processes that seek to strengthen urban economies, particularly in light of the opportunities provided to build more inclusive, resilient, safe and sustainable cities.

Placemaking Workshop, Palestine.©UNHabitat

Participation for inclusive urban prosperity

Inclusive economic growth, decent work and employment for all should be a key objective for a New Arab Urban Agenda in order to foster sustainable urban development across the Arab region, in particular leverage the potential presented by the largely young population and women. Addressing the unemployment challenge in the Arab region is to take into consideration the alignment of educational and vocational training systems to productive employment opportunities. Accompanied by suitable training, capacity development and access to business services youth access to skills development will have to be promoted to enable their full and effective participation in the urban economy, as well as the creation of an enabling environment that promotes economic inclusion and entrepreneurship.

3.4. National Urban Policies[6]

Based on diverse demographic composition and levels of urbanization, Arab countries advanced a wide range of national policy responses. Highly centralized governance structures have led to national government agencies playing a key role in planning and managing urban development, resulting in the fact that most Arab countries have the equivalent or elements of a NUP defined, expressed through a combination of legislation, sectoral strategies or frameworks guiding urban development programs and projects.

NUPs create consensus for an appropriately differentiated model of urban governance and management. They depend on explicit and well-defined interactions between clearly articulated national objectives. Priorities are implemented through programs defined by line ministries, and effective management of urban spatial growth by local governments. In order to manage spatial growth local governments must be able to ensure an adequate supply of serviced land for future growth and prevent unplanned urban expansions. While national policies are the driving forces for urban development, particularly when they are well funded, developing a coherent spatial vision for individual urban areas and other human settlements and implementing them is a local responsibility. A successful NUP is therefore one that is able to balance the role of national and local levels of government, assign clear roles and responsibilities and ensure that the latter have the necessary human and financial resources.

The ongoing turmoil in Syria and other conflicts throughout the region is impacting urban populations, infrastructure and housing. The formulation and implementation of post-conflict policies to rebuild urban assets will require massive investments. Developing a common, long-term vision for urban development is a difficult task in areas faced with uncertain futures due to conflict and insecurity and for governments with limited human and financial resources and several competing priorities. Potential post-conflict reconstruction in countries experiencing armed conflict on their territory will entail projects to rebuild and expand infrastructure systems, provide new housing, and guide population return and resettlement.

Motivations to develop and implement a NUP varies from country to country, in most cases triggered by the desire to eradicate sub-standard housing and manage urban growth in order to curb the development of informal housing on the urban fringe.

Generally, the need to deal with a "crisis" has been the impetus that has prompted the region's governments to conceptualize a NUP. The integration of an urban development strategy as an integral part of its economic planning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is clearly an exception. Diversifying the economy and the opportunities offered by access to the Eurozone were strong motivations to develop an urban policy, a politique de la ville, in Maghreb countries. In Egypt, the need to protect scarce agricultural land and broaden the country's economic base to create employment for its large and increasingly better educated youth has been the main driver, by creating an increasingly urban economy.

(Reference: UN-Habitat. 2015. Assessment Report - National Urban Policies in Arab States. not published)

Tripoli, Libya. Libya is the most urbanized country in the Maghreb with nearly 78 per cent of the population living in urban areas. ©Patrick Poendl-Shutterstock

[6]UN-Habitat. 2015. Assessment Report - National Urban Policies in Arab States (unpublished)

3.5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System

The ASHSUD2030 suggests in its implementation approach the establishment of a Regional Observatory for Housing and Urban Development (RUO), in consultation with national governments responsible for supporting the completion of National Urban Observatory (NUO) systems in Arab countries. The RUO is responsible for identifying, collecting and coordinating the information required from NUOs and measuring the progress towards achieving goals through an agreed set of indicators. These build on national priorities and align with the City Prosperity Initiative (CPI)[7]. The CPI is a global monitoring framework that provides evidence-base for better-informed policy-making. It is firmly grounded on established principles and sound statistical practices that enables the tracking of progress and ensures accountability towards the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly SDG11 and the New Urban Agenda. Countries will be able to identify, quantify, evaluate, monitor and report on progress made by cities and countries in a more structure manner. Several countries in the Arab region have commenced to develop State of Cities Reports, hereby establishing baseline data and information, (re)define local targets, propose strategies for improvement, and set benchmarks for monitoring progress over time.

A dedicated technical entity within the Council of Arab Ministers for Housing and Construction (AMCHC) will follow the implementation of ASHSUD2030. It will institute a monitoring and evaluation framework, in close cooperation with all partners, particularly ESCWA and UN-Habitat ROAS, and regional institutions engaged in promoting sustainable urban development in the Arab region. This includes the Arab Towns Organization (ATO), the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), and the Urban Observatory for Arab Cities (ATUO) and other

[7]UN-Habitat. City Prosperity Initiative. http://unhabitat.org/urban-initiatives/initiatives-programmes/city-prosperity-initiative/

The Udayas, Rabat, Morocco. ©UNHabitat

relevant entities. The observatory will also monitor the progress achieved and provide analyses and support to decision makers. Each Arab state will submit an annual report to RUO, upon which an Arab regional report will be prepared. The Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD) will be the platform to report on and recommend relevant decision-making processes, from the national to the regional and vice versa.

Given the similarities of challenges in the Arab region, a number of Communities of Practice (COP) will be formed, facilitated by LAS and AMCHC in order to exchange approaches, methodologies, legislations and suggestions on institutional structures as well as collaborate in the implementation of common actions. Each CoP determines modalities of exchanging information and frequency and structure of meetings.

3.6. Institutional Mechanisms for Implementing the Arab Urban Agenda[8]

The ASHUD2030 is considered a guiding document for national governments towards more inclusive, integrated and sustainable human settlements in the Arab region. Launched at the 1st AMFHUD in Cairo in December 2015, it will align with the monitoring framework for SDGs at regional level, facilitated by LAS and UNESCWA, and national as well as local levels, coordinated by respective levels of governments. Hereby, the active engagement of local government is key. Covering a time period of

Multi-level implementation mechanism for ASHSUD2030

[8]LAS & UN-Habitat. 2015. Arab Strategy for Housing & Sustainable Urban Development 2030

fifteen years, up to the year 2030, it will be reviewed in light of the HABITAT III recommendations, incorporating the outcomes of the New Urban Agenda besides the SDGs, both inspiring a New Arab Urban Agenda.
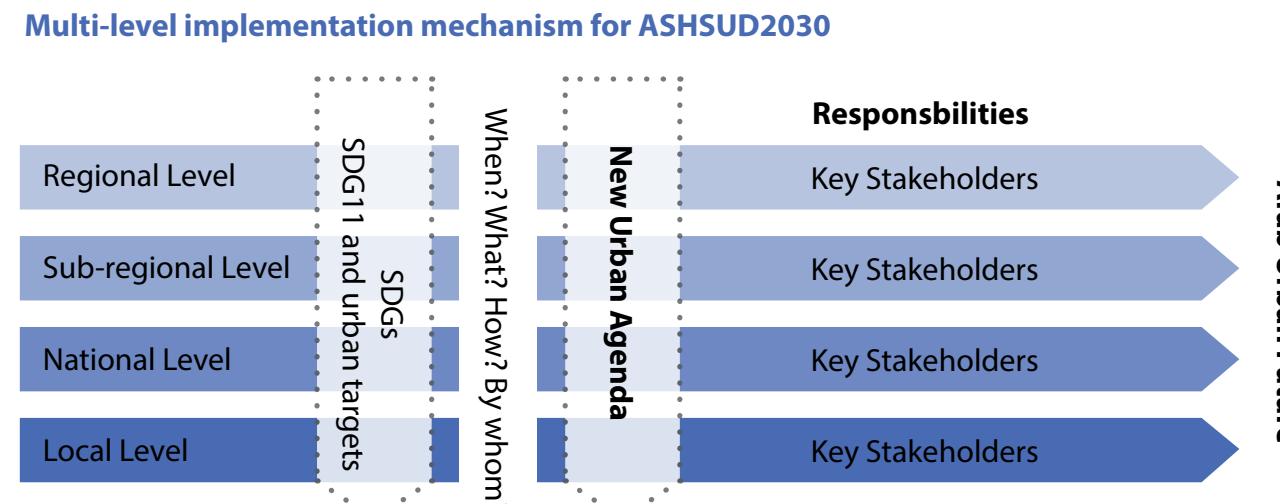
The implementation mechanisms target regional and national levels. Regional mechanisms have the purpose of coordination, dialogue and integration of all Arab states, while national mechanisms address the challenges of each country along with its socio-economic and cultural specificities. Encouraged by LAS, countries are requested to dedicate significant efforts to develop Housing and Urban Development Strategies taking ASHSUD2030 as guideline and cooperation framework. Each country develops an Action Plan to activate ASHSUD2030, define priorities and propose implementation, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms in line with its inputs, paving the way towards HABITAT III and beyond for an integrated representation of the Arab region. LAS along with UN-Habitat ROAS provide technical support and facilitate the exchange of opinions, ideas and experiences concerning implementation mechanisms and indicators at the national level.

National Mechanisms
National governments play a critical role in adopting the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and implementing the objectives and goals of ASHSUD2030.
- Sub-national and local governments assume responsibilities, either directly or jointly with national governments and/or in partnership with communities, academia and private sector actors as well as relevant service providers.
- Each country develops National Action Plan for implementing ASHSUD2030 through a participatory approach, according to its specificities. It is discussed and approved by national ministries and institutions concerned. National conferences and events are encouraged to support innovative methods of linking national strategies to ASHSUD2030.

Regional Mechanisms

- Council of Arab Ministers for Housing and Construction (AMCHC) to extend resolutions for bringing appropriate guiding mechanisms into effect;
- Higher Committee that steers and supervises ASHSUD2030 implementation (with LAS SG as Chairman, AMCHC members, Directors of relevant Arab organizations);
- Regional Consultative Technical Committee that examines project or programme proposals in addition to approving projects and plans at the regional level, monitoring of achievements, offering of recommendations and suggestions to relevant technical bodies;
- Dedicated technical entity within AMCHC that follows implementation of ASHSUD2030 and acts as Secretariat;
- Arab states (relevant ministries) that supervise ASHSUD2030 implementation, undertake coordination and follow-up at national level and liaise with other implementation partners;
- Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development that presents achievements of ASHSUD2030, reflect on progress and support forward action.

Participation mechanisms of UN-Habitat through ROAS

- UN-Habitat ROAS will be the main partner for the Arab States in the implementation of ASHSUD2030, in cooperation with all UN organizations and other related international organizations relevant to housing and urban development. UN-Habitat shall address the specific conditions of each country, and provides technical support for the implementation of the objectives of the ASHSUD2030. Upon the country's request, it contributes in:
- Supporting policy development and implementation in order to create empowering and integrated policies for economic opportunities, housing and official land tenure and provision of basic services.
- Encouraging information and knowledge exchange, and capacity building at all levels to enhance regional, national and local level interventions in urban governance, and increase cooperation among them.
- Supporting implementation of new policies to facilitate the intertwined process of policy development, capacity building and implementation approach to guarantee its coherence and synergy.

Implementation mechanisms for ASHSUD2030

Regional Level
coordination, dialogue and integration of all Arab states

guidelines and cooperation

National level
address challenges of each country along with its socio-economic and cultural specificities

Housing and Urban Development strategies

LAS + UN-Habitat ROAS:
- provide technical support.
- facilitate exchange of opinions, ideas and experiences concerning implementation mechanisms and indicatiors at the national level

Action Plan
define priorities; propose implementation, evaluation and monitoring

4- Next Steps

The potential and prospects of the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030 vision hinges on how well Arab cities and towns perform. If these cities embrace the New Urban Agenda and forge an Arab interpretation and practice, optimism for the future can be justified. However, this requires a sharper explication of what needs to be done, by whom and how the overall institutional architecture will cohere.

Preparations for Habitat III are well underway. In the Arab region, a number of countries have held National Urban Forums (NUF)[9], launched National Urban Campaigns (NUC)[10], mobilized National Habitat Committees (NHC) and have drafted National Habitat III Reports[11] . In December 2015, AMFHUD1 has outlined in the Ca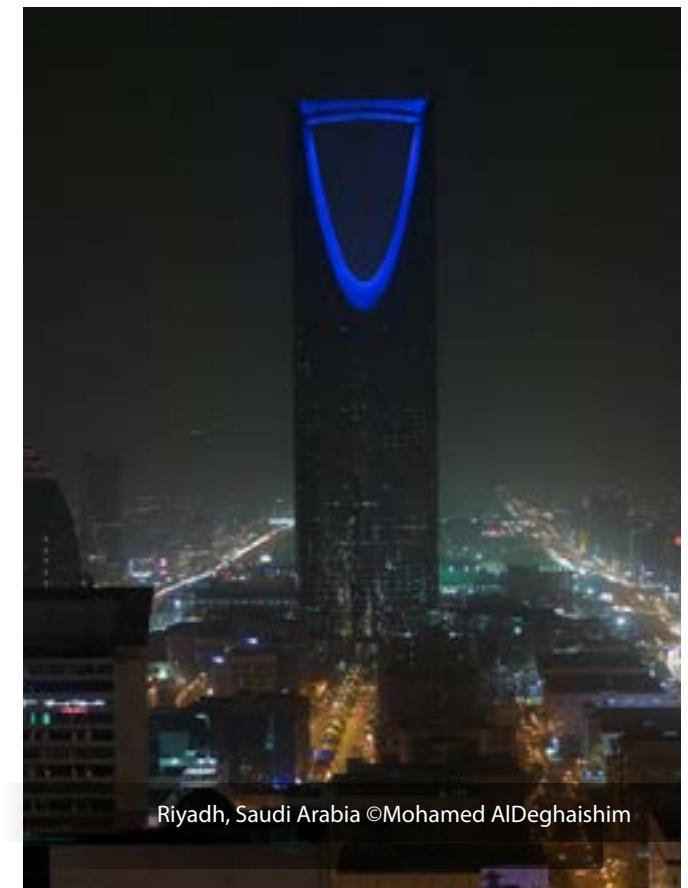iro Declaration the common position of Arab member states towards Habitat III. In February 2016, the draft of the Habitat III Regional Report for the Arab States was submitted by UNESCWA to the Habitat III Secretariat.

In the upcoming months, the Habitat III Regional Report for the Arab States will be reviewed and translated into Arabic for further dissemination among member states. It will provide the Arab regional contribution to the preparations of the Habitat III Outcome Document, the New Urban Agenda. Several NUFs will be held before Habitat III and further are in preparation discussing the implementation of the New Urban Agenda at country level. Moreover, a number of Arab states are still refining their National Habitat III Reports, due to be submitted before the PrepCom3 meeting in July 2016.

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[9] NUFs held in Egypt (June 2015), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (March 2016). Further NUFs planned for Lebanon and Sudan.

[10] NUCs in Egypt (June 2015) and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (March 2016).

[11] As of May 2016, submissions of National Habitat III Reports: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia. Further countries are in the process of finalizing and the submission is expected before PrepCom3: Libya, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon, and UAE.

The Arab region is coordinating their efforts with the regions some of their member states refer to, the Asia Pacific and African regions. In this regard, the alignment of the positioning towards an Arab Urban Agenda is vital. These efforts are coordinated through LAS and UN-Habitat ROAS at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference for Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD) held in 2014 in Seoul, South Korea, African Ministerial Council for Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) held in 2014 in N'Djamena, Chad and the African Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development (AfMFHUD) held in May 2016 in Rabat respectively.

This will lay the foundation for the debates that are necessary to formulate a unified Arab perspective in the three potentially paradigm shifting global processes: (1) the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in September 2015, (2) the Paris COP in December 2015, and (3) Habitat III in October 2016. Other regional processes, such as the Arab Sustainable Development Forum in May 2016, will serve as convening moments where the final components of the Arab Urban Agenda can be agreed upon before the PrepCom3 meeting and Habitat III itself. These all need to be informed by regional preparation processes or conferences designed to enable participation in such processes. It is hoped that, on the back of local and country debates informed by this background report, the Arab preparations will become more substantive and timely. This background report serves as a resource for local, national and regional dialogues about what is at stake and what action is required for the Arab region to make a meaningful intervention. UN-Habitat will continue to technically support Member States in promoting continuous dialogue until a grounded and inspiring vision for the Arab urbanization presents itself.

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia ©Mohamed AlDeghaishim

Cairo Declaration on Housing, and Sustainable Urban Development
Cairo - Egypt, 20 – 22 December 2015

We, the Arab Ministers of Housing and Urban Development, convening in the First Arab Ministerial Forum on the "Arab Urbanization - Present Challenges and Future Prospects," held in Cairo - Arab Republic of Egypt, from 20 - 22 December 2015, as part of the regional preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which will take place in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 – 20 October 2016;

Pursuant to
the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) resolution No. 24/8, which establishes the "regional technical support on sustainable housing and urban development, including the Arab States Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development," issued on the 19th of April 2013;

Citing
the commitments adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo - Egypt in 1994, which stipulate that "the process of urbanization is fundamental to the economic and social development," as well as the Second United

Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat), held in Istanbul - Turkey in 1996, and after reviewing the Habitat Agenda included in the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations resolution No. S-25/2, on the 9th of June, 2001;

As part of our commitment
to implement all the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the 11th goal of sustainable development: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable," and all targets falling thereunder, especially target 11.a: "Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning," as well as the Arab pledges made at the Third United Nations Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 and Climate Change Summit (COP21);

Reaffirming
our commitment to all local, national and regional preparations for the United Nations Conference (Habitat III) and our contributions to the development

of the new urban agenda that shall be adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in 2016 (Habitat III); Reiterating the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (2015 – 2030);

In light of
Resolution no. (9) issued by the League of Arab States Ministerial Council for Housing and Construction in its 29th session, held in December 2012 in Iraq, on the establishment of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development, which was presented by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Arab countries in the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) of 2013;

Acknowledging that
Urbanization rate in the Arab region has been one of the highest rates in the world in recent years. Meanwhile, these rates have been accompanied by an increase in population pressure, rapid urbanization, large-scale growth in major cities and high rates of urbanization in medium and small cities, causing an over-load on infrastructure and the already limited resources and an ever-mounting pressure to provide adequate housing for all, including urban and basic services;
• The increase in poverty ratio in cities is causing a growth in

the number of slums and widening the urban gap between sectors of population, which reduces the chances of equal access to adequate housing and basic services;
• Israeli occupation of Arab territories, violent conflicts, civil strife and terrorism have a devastating effect on cities, towns and living conditions of their inhabitants and their social harmony;
• The forced internal and international migrations as well as the mass exoduses of refugees and displaced people strongly affect the Arab cities;
• Promoting efficient political administration, boosting the foundations of good governance and strengthening the national and local central authorities, along with taking comprehensive steps to enhance the decision-making process, are essential elements to address urbanization challenge in Arab states,

Realizing
• The importance of ensuring gender equality and empowering women to access adequate housing and to contribute effectively in the development process of the society;
• The necessity of ensuring the rehabilitation and integration of vulnerable and marginalized categories and people with special needs in urban communities as

well as promoting the integration of youth and unleashing their creative potentials to develop their civil societies;

- The importance of developing rural areas and providing livelihoods to promote stability and work there along with promoting economic opportunities and building bridges of communication with nearby cities.

Acknowledging

- The delicate situation which some of Arab states are going through and the cruelty of civil conflicts and terrorism suffered by urban and rural communities, which caused a systematic demolition of the ancient Arab cities and world heritage listed sites in many Arab cities;
- The Arab strong and firm stance in the face of policies and procedures of the Israeli occupation to Judaize Jerusalem and change its demographic nature and heritage.

We reaffirm all the outcomes of major UN conferences on population, development, women, children and climate. We also stress the first goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere."

Based on all of the above, we hereby decide the following:

1. Take all measures to implement the new urban agenda that will emanate from Habitat III, taking into account the fact that the human being is at the centre.
2. The establishment of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development as an advisory mechanism to enhance the policies and strategies for sustainable housing and urban development in Arab states, under the auspices of the League of Arab States, which shall develop the Forum's appropriate institutional framework to ensure it works effectively within the LAS system;
3. The Arab Ministerial Forum shall serve as a platform for interaction among different visions, with the objective of formulating regional strategies and policies that guide national and local policies and strategies. The Forum shall also provide mechanisms for the development of regional positions and unified views in order to contribute to the ongoing international development dialogue, in particular the development of a regional vision on how to implement the 11th goal, as well as the implementation of the new urban agenda and relevant goals. Furthermore, the Forum shall seek to promote and expand cooperation initiatives among Arab states in the areas of housing and sustainable urban development. Additionally, the Forum will integrate the efforts of research institutions and academia, on both regional and national level, in order to enhance the knowledge base, by providing them with social, economic, environmental and demographic dynamics.

Mechanisms

a. The Arab Council of Ministers of Housing and Construction League of Arab States is the supervisor of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Sustainable Housing and Urban Development, in coordination with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the host country.
b The mandate of the technical secretariat of the forum to be expanded to include the municipalities, the private sector, the civil society and stakeholders in the field of sustainable urban development.
c. Call upon Arab countries to identify national focal points for sustainable urban development responsible of contributing to the organization of the Forum and follow up the implementation of the outcomes at the national level in coordination with all the relevant national parties.
d. Develop a funding mechanism for the activities of the Forum, supporting its technical secretariat and the implementation of its outputs.
e. Call upon the Arab countries to formulate a national plan to achieve the sustainable development goals related to sustainable urban development; and establish a national committee to follow up on all the relevant issues to sustainable urban development, gathering all government agencies concerned with urban development, the private sector and other stakeholders.
f. Invite the UN Human Settlements Programme to support the efforts of the Arab Ministerial Forum for housing and sustainable urban development and recognize it as a regional leading body entrusted with the formulation and implementation of its policies and programmes at the Arab regional level.

Abbreviations

AMFHUD	Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development
COP	Conference of the Parties
Habitat III	Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NHC	National Habitat Committee
NUC	National urban Campaign
NUF	National Urban Forum
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
ROAS	Regional Office for Arab States
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

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Urbanization presents an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate the Arab transformation and capacity to respond to development challenges. The Arab region is the most urbanized and urbanizing region in the world and its urban population will almost double in the next two decades. The imperative of steering and guiding the urban growth process is thus a priority undertaking.

The report highlights key trends, policy imperatives and policy priorities for an Arab Urban Agenda in line with the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030. This is a timely undertaking at a time when the role of urbanization in sustainable development is widely acknowledged including in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) further provides a renewed opportunity for Arab efforts to ensure an environmentally sound, socially just and economically inclusive urbanization paradigm.

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