

## NOTE TO READER

### Qualitative Analysis: Framing SDG achievement in the overall context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The present report reviews the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region in reference to the 17 SDGs and the 169 targets and their interlinkages. Achievement is measured in relation to quantifiable targets or targets that set a benchmark (for example, target 3.4 on reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third by 2030) and those that call for policy change (for example, target 5.a on undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources).

The Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020 (ASDR 2020) is not a progress report. It offers an analysis of the root causes that undermine achievement of the SDGs in the region. Using a human rights lens to frame the analysis, it probes the extent to which the situation in the region and under each SDG is inclusive, just and rights-based and reflective of the principles of the 2030 Agenda. Each chapter covers one SDG but addresses the interlinkages among all SDGs. It identifies the main strategic interventions needed to dismantle the main barriers.

The analysis builds in part on the results of the quantitative analysis at target and indicator level. It also builds on a wealth of United Nations knowledge of the region accessed through major United Nations publications as well as input received from United Nations agencies working in the Arab States region. Finally, the analysis builds on academic research from the region as well as a rigorous review process by independent experts from across the region, in addition to United Nations experts and practitioners (see Acknowledgments).

### Quantitative analysis: using the global SDG indicator framework

The report uses the global indicator framework for Sustainable Development Goals developed by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/71/313. In order to review and assess progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region, all 232 indicators were considered, but the findings include only those indicators with sufficient data to obtain a regional average, as per the methodology used in this report.

### Data sources and methodology for quantitative analysis

The United Nations Global SDG Database maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) is used

as the main data source for this report. The database provides access to harmonized and validated data compiled through the United Nations System and to a metadata repository. As such, calculation of all regional averages for the indicators was based on this database. The database was accessed between June and October 2018 and a data update was applied in July 2019 for values of 2017 and earlier. Other data sources as they appear in other United Nations publications were also used in the analysis of issues as needed.

Data was downloaded from the Global SDG Database and examined in three steps.

**Step 1 - Substitution of data gaps:** data availability for every indicator/subindicator for the period between 1990 and 2017 was examined for all 22 Arab States. Where large data gaps existed, missing data were substituted using the available most recent data point. Time lags of up to eight years were applied, taking 2009 as a cut-off date. The set cut-off date was exceeded by one year only when rich data for Arab States were available.

**Step 2 - Filtering of indicators:** the indicators were filtered based on two criteria, namely (a) data availability for half or more of the total Arab region's population, and (b) data availability for more than one third of all Arab States set at eight countries.

**Data for each indicator is considered "available" in the present report if all the above criteria are met to allow for the calculation of a regional average. Where data is completely unavailable or is available only in a few countries and does not meet the above two criteria, the report notes that "adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator".**

For each chapter, an "indicator coverage" chart is provided reflecting the extent of availability of calculated indicator values.

**Step 3 – Data cross-checking and final substitution:** all Arab country-level data were cross-checked after the July 2019 major update of the Global SDG Database. In cases where there were significant changes to the selected country-year data points that could affect regional aggregates, step 1 was repeated. A note is included in each chapter listing the indicators that were affected by this update. More details on the data substitution process for the countries affected by this step is available in the online Annex to this Report.

For every indicator that met the above criteria, the aggregate for the Arab region is calculated and compared to the indicator's target value (where available), the world aggregate and the aggregates of other regions. The aggregation method used is mostly a weighted mean of the country values in a particular region, and at the global level, and in some rare cases a sum of those values. The choice of weighting was determined by the metadata where possible or using established precedent in the

literature. The aggregation method and weight used are noted under each figure in the Report.

The online annexes present the data by country, showing the values used in the calculation of regional averages (<https://www.unescwa.org/publications/arab-sustainable-development-report-2020>).

### Composition of regions

The regional groupings used in the Report follow the geographic regions outlined under the “Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use (M49)” of UNSD. They are the following: Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA); Central and Southern Asia (CSA); Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (ESEA); Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC); Oceania [excluding Australia and New Zealand]; and Europe and Northern America (ENA).

The Arab Region (designated by Arab in the graphs) as presented in the Report is composed of 22 States located in North Africa and Western Asia and the Horn of Africa. They are: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

To allow more in-depth comparison and analysis within the Arab region, subregional groupings are also used in the report following Arab countries’ geographic location and/or economic structures and income levels. The subregional groupings are:

- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) subregion which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates;
- The Mashreq subregion which includes Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic;
- The Maghreb subregion which includes Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia;
- The Arab LDCs subregion which includes Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen.

In certain cases, data and analysis by United Nations entities using slightly adjusted regional groupings are presented and marked as such noting that the analysis refers to “countries of the region” rather than the “Arab region”. Those instances are referenced, and the endnotes explain the adjusted geographical breakdown.