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Arab Forum for Equality

Fairmont Hotel, Amman, 30-31 May 2022

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has motivated all countries to address the inequalities that cause hardship, division and violence. The Arab region is the most unequal region worldwide, and the only region where poverty has increased since 2010. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Grand Challenge on Inequality and Exclusion of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, hosted by the Center on International Cooperation at New York University, are bringing together political leaders, ministers, the private sector, experts and civil society from the Arab region at the Arab Forum for Equality, to be held in Amman on 30 and 31 May 2022. The Forum aims to generate momentum for progress in the region by launching a multi-year and multi-stakeholder dialogue focused on practical solutions to tackle inequality.

The theme of the Forum is “Towards inclusive youth employment in the Arab region”. In addition to highlighting inequality in the region, participants will discuss policies to reduce inequality worldwide and in the region. The Forum will conclude with the launch of two important regional initiatives to tackle inequality:

The following are the specific objectives of the Arab Forum for Equality:

- Launch a multi-stakeholder dialogue with global and Arab leaders and experts on inequality and exclusion in the region.
- Discuss trends and impacts of inequality, including in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, in the region.
- Discuss practical policy solutions for tackling inequality and exclusion, with a focus on youth unemployment as one driver of multifaceted inequality in the Arab region.
- Promote the implementation of various policies, initiatives and lessons learned to reduce inequality.

The event will build on the findings of the Pathfinders Grand Challenge on Inequality and Exclusion report entitled [From Rhetoric to Action: Delivering Equality and Inclusion](#). Pathfinders is a cross-regional partnership involving the Governments of Canada, Costa Rica, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay, ESCWA, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Oxfam and the World Alliance for Citizens Participation (CIVICUS), along with numerous other partners and international experts. An Arab version of the Pathfinders report focusing on the Arab region, entitled “Inequality in the Arab Region: A Ticking Time Bomb”, will underpin the discussions at the Forum.

Provisional agenda

Day 1 Monday, 30 May 2022

9.30–10 a.m. Welcome remarks

The welcome remarks will illustrate in a stylized fashion cases of inequality between countries, within countries, between geographical areas (rural, urban), between social segments (men, women, and vulnerable groups such as young people, persons with disabilities and older persons), and within the same social segment.

Master of Ceremony:

Mehrinaz Elawady, Director, ESCWA Cluster on Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development

Keynote speakers:

1. **Rola Dashti**, Executive Secretary of ESCWA
2. **Omar Razzaz**, Former Prime Minister of Jordan

10–11.30 a.m. Session 1. Discussion with global and Arab experts: What does inequality look like?

This session will set the scene for the Forum. It will start with a global discussion on what inequality looks like, especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated inequality globally. It will highlight how inequality in the Arab region compares with global inequality, shedding light on the experiences of other countries. Moreover, it will focus on global and regional trends, and on how inequality moves between generations and differs between places and social groups. The session will also consider the politics of inequality.

Moderator:

Hania Sholkamy, Associate Research Professor, Social Research Centre, American University in Cairo

Speakers:

1. **Paul Ladd**, Director, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
2. **Saba Almubaslat**, Regional Director, Ford Foundation
3. **Ibrahim Elbadawi**, Managing Director, Economic Research Forum
4. **Faiza Shaheen**, Inequality & Exclusion Lead, Pathfinders, NYU Center on International Cooperation

11.30 a.m.–12.00 p.m. Coffee break



12–1.30 p.m. Session 2. The face of inequality in the Arab region

This session will focus on various forms of inequality and their effects in the Arab region, with a specific focus on wealth inequality, gender inequality, and limited social protection coverage.

Moderator:

Lamia Moubayed, President, Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan - Lebanon
 Vice-Chair, UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Speakers:

1. **Ahmad Majdalani**, Minister of Social Development of the State of Palestine
2. **Amal Belhaj**, Minister of Family, Women, Childhood and Elderly of Tunisia
3. **Mohammed AlZaouri**, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor of Yemen
4. **Barq Al-Dmour**, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Social Development, and Acting Director-General of the National Aid Fund, Jordan
5. **Taher Bel Hassan**, Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Ministry of Planning of Libya

1.30–3 p.m. Session 3: Dialogue with decision makers: policies that reduce inequality

This session will focus on policies that deliver equality, and those that can lead to inequality. It will focus on social protection, job creation, and better financing as policy directives that can reduce inequality and exclusion. It will also highlight the role of the private sector as an important player in reducing inequality and provide case studies from around the globe and

Moderator:

Lina Khatib, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Chatham House

Speakers:

1. **Nivine Kabbaj**, Minister of Social Solidarity of Egypt
2. **Ayman Almuflih**, Minister of Social Development of Jordan
3. **Wafaa Abou Bakr Al-Kilani**, Minister of Social Affairs of Libya
4. **Kaouter Krikou**, Minister of National Solidarity, Family and Women of Algeria
5. **Sultan Aljorais**, Under-Secretary of Social Security, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development of Saudi Arabia

3–4 p.m. Lunch break and conclusion of Day 1



Day 2 Tuesday, 31 May 2022

9.30–11 a.m. Session 4: Youth unemployment as a type of inequality in the Arab region

This session will flag youth unemployment in the Arab region as a driver for multiple forms of exclusion and inequality. The session will also present practical solutions from the region and the globe to address the issue of youth inequality, such as social dialogue.

Moderator:

Reem Abu Hassan, Honorary Chairperson, Association for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence

Speakers:

1. **Geannina Dinarte**, Former Minister of the Presidency, Costa Rica
2. **Ahmad Masa'deh**, Former Minister for Public Sector Reform, Ambassador to the EU, and Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Jordan
3. **Nurhayati Ali Assegaf**, President of the Geneva Council for International Affairs and Development, Former Parliamentarian, Indonesia
4. **Charlotta Sparre**, Director of the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa
5. **Rania Ayman**, Youth Employment Expert (Social Enterprise/Activist)

11–11.30 a.m. Coffee break

11.30 a.m.–1 p.m. Session 5: Launch of practical initiatives and tools to address inequality with a focus on youth unemployment

This session will include a brief presentation on practical initiative(s) and tools that aim at reducing inequality in the region. The session will highlight the initiatives and tools objectives and functions and their mode of operations.

Master of Ceremony:

Lara Tamash, Journalist and TV Anchor

Speakers:

1. **Superstar Elissa**
2. **Khaled Hanafy**, Secretary-General, Union of Arab Chambers
3. **Ali Awdeh**, Head of Research, Union of Arab Banks
4. **Sherine Helmy**, CEO, Pharco Corporation & Pharco Pharmaceutical International-KSA (3 minutes recorded Statement)
5. **Sarah Alharthey**, Business Development Manager, ACWA Power
6. **Salim Araji**, Team Lead on ESCWA's Future of Work Initiative
7. **Rola Dashti**, Executive Secretary, ESCWA

1–1.30 p.m. Closing ceremony

Wrap-up and key messages

Lara Tamash

1.30–2.30 p.m. Lunch break and conclusion of the Forum

