



Information note

Overview

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2023 (AFSD-2023) will be held in-person at the United Nations House in Beirut from 14 to 16 March 2023.

In line with the global theme and focus of the *2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*, AFSD-2023 will discuss solutions and inspire action for accelerating the recovery from COVID-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region. It will focus on the five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review in 2023 at HLPF, namely **SDG 6** on clean water and sanitation, **SDG 7** on affordable and clean energy, **SDG 9** on industry, innovation and infrastructure, **SDG 11** on sustainable cities and communities, and **SDG 17** on partnerships for the Goals. It will also focus on other regional goals and priorities, particularly poverty, inequality and gender equality.

AFSD-2023 will be chaired by Yemen.

About the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) is the primary regional mechanism for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region.

Organized annually by ESCWA, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and United Nations agencies working in the region, AFSD brings together Arab Governments and a wide range of stakeholders to discuss progress, review national and regional experiences, and consider the latest developments and implementation mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional levels.

The AFSD report formally delivers the voice of the region to the global High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held annually in New York. It sets out key messages on the opportunities and challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda in Arab countries.

Eight Arab forums have been held since 2014. For more information, visit: www.unescwa.org/2030-afsd

From AFSD-2022 to AFSD-2023

AFSD-2022 highlighted regional regressions in poverty, inequality and unemployment, which were accentuated by the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the climate crisis. The debt burden, particularly in middle-income countries, emerged as a pressing threat to the consolidation of positive steps made during the pandemic, including expanding social protection coverage, supporting small and medium enterprises, and accelerating digitalization. AFSD-2022 called for a shift in policymaking to achieve an inclusive,

gender-responsible and green recovery. It emphasized the need for better data and smart spending, and encouraged better coordination between ministries of planning and finance.

AFSD-2023 will build on this momentum to engage Governments and other stakeholders on policy, financing and data solutions for mobilizing action on regional SDG priorities and shoring up resilience in the face of multiple crises.

AFSD-2023 will have the following main components:

A high-level dialogue will focus on the shifts in action needed in the region to achieve the SDGs by 2030, considering the challenges of poverty and inequality. It will result in key regional messages to be presented at the **2023 SDG Summit**, which will mark the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Plenary sessions on the SDGs under review will appraise progress towards achieving SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 11. They will build on the findings of background notes on each SDG, while considering gender dimensions and the integrated and interlinked nature of the SDGs.

A plenary session on **SDG data** will showcase ways that innovative sources of data can help inform policies that leave no one behind.

A plenary session on **financing and planning** will continue the conversation launched in AFSD-2022, and push for further political commitment to strengthen coordination between planning and financing processes.

Spotlight segments, a new addition to AFSD, will be short presentations of impactful and innovative initiatives that support sustainable development in the Arab region, and that have the potential to be brought to scale or replicated in other contexts.

A roundtable on voluntary national reviews (VNRs) focusing on the five Arab countries that will present VNRs at the 2023 HLPF, namely Bahrain, the Comoros, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Winners of the Digital Arabic Content Award 2023 will be announced at a special event to recognize the best Arabic digital content products supporting the SDGs.

Twelve special sessions will further reinforce the overall theme of AFSD-2023, with a more specialized and detailed focus on selected regional priorities.

In its **second edition, the Annual SDG Review 2023** will provide an analysis of the contribution of the private sector to the SDGs in the region, along with a statistical check-in on where the Arab region stands in terms of realizing the 17 SDGs.

On its sidelines, AFSD-2023 will also feature a knowledge fair and media activities.

Outcomes

AFSD-2023 will result in a set of key messages reflecting discussions at the Arab Forum and relevant preparatory meetings.¹ These key messages will be presented by

The AFSD-2023 agenda and other documents will gradually be made available on the Forum web page and updated regularly: www.afsd-2023.unescwa.org

the Chair of AFSD-2023 at the 2023 HLPF, and will constitute, along with the full report of AFSD-2023, the Arab region's main input to the 2023 HLPF.

Participants and registration

Participants comprise high-level representatives of Arab Governments, including ministers and senior officials responsible for planning, implementing and reporting on the 2030 Agenda. In line with the theme of AFSD-2023 and the 2023 HLPF, member States' delegations may also include representatives of government institutions involved in COVID-19 recovery plans, water, energy, industry, infrastructure, urban development, data and statistics, financing and technology.

Regional intergovernmental organizations, civil society networks and organizations, parliamentarians, academic institutions, private sector representatives, and United Nations agencies

working in the Arab region will also take part in this annual multi-stakeholder event.

Participation will be in-person at the United Nations House in Beirut. Those who are unable to attend physically can follow the online streaming of various sessions through the AFSD-2023 website.

Participants whose attendance is sponsored by ESCWA are requested to register through the link provided in their invitation letter by Wednesday, **1 February 2023**. Other participants can register by Wednesday, **1 March 2023** through the following link: <https://indico.un.org/event/1003520/page/1004-registration>

Correspondence

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¹ These include the *2022 Arab Regional Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda* (Beirut, 29-30 November 2022); a consultative meeting on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (forthcoming); and a youth forum and regional meeting of civil society organizations on sustainable development in the Arab region (forthcoming).

