



Special Session 2

Moving Forward on the Learning-to-Earning Agenda in the Arab Region

Tuesday, 14 March 2023, 4.15–5.45 p.m. Beirut time

Background and objective

The region's labour market dynamics and requirements are rapidly changing. The proliferation of technologies and automation brought forward by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI), as well as COVID-19, climate change, demographic forces and globalization have all significantly altered the nature of jobs and caused substantial shifts in labour market demands. Inevitably, the job market demands have changed and hence the roles and skills of young people need to catch up with this evolving landscape and adapt to the changing demands of the world of work.

School-to-work-transition reflects the quality of education and the level of labor market rigidity. The inability of youth in the Arab region to transition to stable employment and earn a decent living is mainly driven by macroeconomic policies that are not resulting in the creation of decent job opportunities. However, even where jobs are being created, the continuously changing nature of demanded skills, the incompatible skills set available among youth in the region and the inability to match the demand with the supply effectively is impacting the ability of youth in the region to secure employment.

Taking into consideration the ongoing shifts in the work modalities, and within the framework of a lifelong learning approach focused on continuous learning and adaptability, youth in the region need to focus their attention not only on obtaining the most appropriate educational background and upscaling their vocational and hard skills, but on acquiring the entrepreneurial and life skills as well as the requisite soft skills such as creativity, innovation, problem solving, leadership, communication, team-building, and emotional intelligence that are in high demand by employers and can be used across a wide range of occupational fields.

Against this backdrop, the Regional High-Level Meeting on Young People's Learning, Skilling, and Transition to Decent Work which took place in May 2022 examined multiple pathways for Arab Youth to develop the requisite skills for improving their livelihoods, improving their employability and realizing their full potential as active agents of change. The HLM culminated in the adoption by 16 Arab countries of a set of national voluntary commitments to advance the learning-to-earning agenda in the Arab region. Therefore, the 2023 Special Session on Youth constitutes a timely opportunity to showcase progress made on some of these commitments by Arab countries. More specifically, it will pave the way for Arab youth, NGOs and CSOs active on youth issues, academics, policy makers and the private sector to exchange views on policy and practical responses for moving forward on the school-to-work transition.

Moderator

Ghadi Bou Moussa, News Reporter and News Anchor, MTV, Lebanon

Opening Remarks

Mayada Adil, Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals, Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth

Panelists

Mohamed A. Gawad Allam, Minister Plenipotentiary (Commercial), Head of Sector, Multilateral Cooperation (UN, International Financial Institutions, Other International Organizations), Ministry of International Cooperation, Egypt

Sherine Helmy, CEO, Pharco Pharmaceuticals, Egypt

Amira Naji, Tunisia Business School, Tunisia

Yaman Alsabek, CEO, Sanad Youth for Development, Syrian Arab Republic

Said Elbanna, Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship, Professor in Management, Qatar University

Salim Araji, First Economic Affairs Officer, ESCWA

Nina Chami, Human Resources Manager, Gulf and Middle East, Chevron, UAE

Anthony Fakhoury, Project and Research Analyst, Knowledge Project, UNDP

Questions to be addressed

- How do private sector companies in the Arab region actively support and empower youth within their organizations and through their partnerships with external organizations?
- Are there any promising practices to support young women and men seeking employment or creating businesses?
- What are the main improvements/changes to the enabling ecosystem for increasing youth employment opportunities, including entrepreneurship?
- According to ESCWA skills monitor, which skills are in high demand in the Arab labour markets?
- What are the new skills that need to be learned by Arab youth to expand their employment opportunities? Which skills need to be upgraded to fit the demand?
- What needs to be done to expedite up-skilling and re-skilling Arab youth and increase their employability, including in sectors supporting green and digital transitions?

This Special Session will be organized as a hybrid event. To participate over Zoom, please [register here](#).

Those physically present at the UN House can attend the session in Committee Room I (B1 floor).



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