



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



**Under the auspices of HEM Mr. Faisal Alibrahim
Minister of Economy and Planning at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
President of the 4th round of the Arab Council for Population and
Development**

Side Event on the margins of the 56th Session of the United Nations
Commission on Population and Development
"Population, education and work are tributaries of the sustainable
development process in the Arab countries"

12 April 2023
From: 13:15-14:30

I. Background

The special theme of the 56th session of the Commission on Population and Development, taking place in April 2023, is "Population, education and sustainable development". The theme is closely related to chapter XI of the ICPD Programme of Action adopted by Governments in 1994 during the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, Egypt, and to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The Arab countries have witnessed a remarkable progress in the rise of education enrollment rates in the Arab countries, especially at the pre-university levels, and the gender gap in the net enrollment rate has decreased significantly in recent years. Enrollment in secondary education is lower than in primary education, and although the gender gap in net enrollment has decreased in some countries, it has widened in others, especially in countries experiencing conflict. The literacy rate among young people aged between (15-24) has risen to 85%, but the quality of education still represents an obstacle to the graduates' empowerment, whether with regard to skills relevant to scientific innovation, participation in economic and social development processes, or

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joining the labor market, leaving nearly 30% of the workforce outside the labor market. This in turn leads a large number of Arab youth to think about emigration in order to search for a job opportunity or to engage in informal economy, which negatively affects the progress in achieving the sustainable development goals and realizing the 2030 agenda.

The Arab region is characterized by a heterogeneous demographic reality, with countries at different stages of demographic transition, due to wide-ranging social, economic, political and cultural factors specific to each country, as well as international and interregional population movements. In 2022, the Arab population will reach 453 million. The population of the region is expected to increase to more than 520 million by 2030 and 676 million by 2050.

Arab countries are made up of young societies, where children aged 15 years and below represent about a third of the population in the Arab region, and youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years represent about 17 percent of the population (according to 2020 statistics). The rise in the number of youth, which is considered a demographic dividend, is due to the increase in the total fertility rates in the region in previous decades, despite their subsequent decline after that, - as the total fertility rate declined from 6.2 in 1990 to 3.1 children per woman in 2022-, and it varies between countries. In addition to many other factors, including women's level of education, standard of living, availability of family planning programs, and political conditions, influence these disparities.

Furthermore, education is a key factor in promoting sustainable development. Educating women and girls contributes significantly to the health and survival of children, reducing child marriage, early and unplanned pregnancies, and provides a critical path to women's economic and social empowerment.

Hence, the demographic reality of the Arab region and the reality of education and employment and its impact on achieving gender equality and girls' education lead us to understand reproductive health issues, its impact on maternal mortality rate, improvement of the quality of life and issues affecting the sustainable development. This in turn leads to the need for evidence-based scientific thinking to develop policies and plans at the short, medium and long term in order to address deficiencies in education programs and future labor market needs in light of global changes, digital transformation, climate changes, and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aligned with the thematic focus of the CPD 56th Session “Population, Education and Sustainable Development”, and based on Resolution No. (3) issued by the Arab Council for Population and Development in its fourth round, regarding the participation in the 56th session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, the League of Arab States in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Planning at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the ESCWA and the UNFPA/ ASRO, are organizing a side event on the margins of the 56th session of the CPD under the auspices of H.E.M Faisal Alibrahim, Minister

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of Economy and Planning at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and President of the 4th round of the Arab Council for Population and Development, entitled "Population, Education and Work are tributaries of the sustainable development process in the Arab countries"

II. Objectives

The main objectives of the planned side event are the following:

1. Highlighting population trends and the reality of education and employment in Arab countries: challenges and opportunities, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Reflecting on the importance of education for women and girls: the risks that arise and the benefits (access to reproductive health services, early marriage, violence, etc.)
3. Drawing attention to the importance of education quality and the nexus between education programs and labor market requirements and future challenges in light of digital transformation and climate change.
4. Discussing the necessity of investing in youth as a human capital and opportunity for their countries to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, and to achieve the sustainable development goals. In addition to the use of demography in projecting population size in education, working age and development needs as a tool in developing policies and plans based on evidence.

III. Date and Time

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 12, 2023 from 13:15 to 14:30 (1 hour 15 minutes), New York time.

IV. Agenda and Panelists

Welcoming Remarks:

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| 01:15-01:30 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ms. Mona Shahab - Senior Consultant. President of the Arab Council for Population and Development (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia- Ministry of Economy and Planning)- H.E Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh – Assistant Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Head of Social Affairs Sector- Ms. Laila Baker – Regional Director of UNFPA Arab States Office |
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Panel Presentations:

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| 01:130-02:20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Main demographic trends and patterns in the Arab region, challenges and gaps”, Mr. Ismail Lubbad – Regional Advisor at UNFPA (virtual)- “Education and employment”, Minister Plenipotentiary Chouaa Dassouky – Director of Population Policies Department at the League of Arab States |
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- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia intervention (President of the Arab Council for Population and Development) Ms. Mona Shahab - Senior Consultant, Ministry of Economy and Planning.
- “When households became schools and workplaces: Policy implications for post COVID-19 Era”, Mr. Ahmed Aref – Planning and Content Manager at Doha International Family Institute
- “Transition from education to labor market”, Mrs. Sara Salman – Regional Advisor on Population Affairs at ESCWA (virtual)

02:20-02:30

- **Closing Reflections**

V. Participants

The side event is targeting representatives of Arab States, members of the Arab Council for Population and Development, permanent representatives and Delegates of Arab States’ Permanent Missions to the United Nations, experts and researchers, representatives of civil society organizations, and partners from the United Nations Population Fund, ESCWA and the League of Arab States.