

**Concept Note**

**Regional consultation for Western Asia  
in support of the 2013 Annual Ministerial  
Review of the UN Economic and Social  
Council**

**“Innovation and technology for  
sustainable development”**

**Amman, Jordan  
26 November 2012**

**Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

## Background

The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) is a key function of the UN Economic and Social Council established by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Social Summit. It was mandated as an instrument to track progress and step up efforts towards the realization of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals, by the 2015 target date.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last six years, the AMR has assumed an important role to assess and review progress (or lack thereof) in the implementation of the IADGs. The first AMR was held in July 2007 in Geneva and focused on poverty and hunger (MDG1). The following AMR sessions focused on, respectively, goals related to sustainable development (MDG7) in 2008; health (MDG 4, 5, 6) in 2009; gender (MDG3) in 2010; education in 2011 (MDG 2 and 3); and productive capacity, employment and decent work in 2012.

Each AMR session features three key elements: national voluntary presentations (NVPs), country-led regional consultations<sup>2</sup> and a global review based on a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General. These elements are complemented by a number of side events organized at the global level, including an innovation fair; youth event; preparatory meeting and e-discussion on the AMR theme.<sup>3</sup>

The theme for the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review is “*Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs*”.

## Objectives and expected value-added

The objective of country-led regional consultations is to support the preparations for the AMR and to enable countries to engage at an early stage in the process leading to the AMR session to be held during the ECOSOC high-level segment in Geneva, in July 2013.

The initiative can also support the global review by focusing – in addition to the overall performance of the region in relation to science, technology and innovation – on one specific aspect of the AMR theme that is especially relevant to countries in the region. This ensures that the analysis that supports ECOSOC’s deliberations in July is genuinely global, taking into account regional variations in relation to the theme.

The expected value-added of the meeting includes:

- In-depth examination of a specific aspect of the AMR theme particularly relevant to the countries in the region

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/60/1, Para. 155 (c).

<sup>2</sup> Most recently, for the 2012 AMR, in Japan, on “Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work in Asia and the Pacific: a regional approach to sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and achieving the MDGs” (Kyoto, 7 December 2011); Ethiopia, on “Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as drivers of productive capacity and job creation” (Addis Ababa, 25 March 2012); and Uruguay, on “Productivity, Employment and Social Protection” (Montevideo, 27 April 2012).

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amr.shtml>

- Review of progress on the use of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development and achievement of the MDGs in the region and related challenges, especially those that could best be addressed through regional cooperation
- Exchange of lessons learned and good practices
- Inclusion of key stakeholders – governments, civil society, UN system institutions and private sector – early in the AMR process
- Opportunity to launch (or prepare for the launch) of new partnership initiatives as part of the 2013 AMR session

## **Proposed Focus**

The proposed focus of the meeting is: **“Innovation and technology for sustainable development”**. Some of the greatest successes in international development have occurred through the application of technology. Today’s technologies offer a new generation of solutions for reducing global poverty and improving sustainability. However, translating the potential of technology into development impact will only be possible if the right enabling environment is in place. The regional meeting provides an opportunity for key actors in the region to discuss the enabling factors and policy approaches that have driven innovation and sustainability efforts in Western Asia, and to share good practices for implementation.

## **Format and modalities**

The regional preparatory meeting is recommended to be held as a half-day event, consisting of two plenary sessions. It should take place in the context of the meeting of the Board of Governors of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia’s Technology Centre, tentatively scheduled on 26 November 2012, in Amman, Jordan.

The first session would be devoted to a brief introduction of the topic by a distinguished speaker followed by a roundtable discussion devoted to a dialogue on promoting a comprehensive enabling environment for science, technology and innovation in Western Asia, and facilitating the exchange of productive capacities among enterprises in the region. The composition of the roundtable should aim to incorporate diverse perspectives from relevant stakeholder groups to facilitate an interactive debate. The second session would be devoted a discussion of regional approaches for the achievement of sustainable development through harnessing global knowledge and technologies.

## **Documentation**

A substantive background document to be prepared in advance of the event on the theme of the meeting will lay the basis for discussion and raise issues for debate. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), will contribute to the preparation of this document. As a follow-up to the meeting an analytical summary will be circulated (see below).

## **Participation**

Target participants would include: 1) policy makers from the countries in the region with responsibility for the implementation of national development strategies; 2) representatives of

multilateral institutions and key donors engaged with the theme of the meeting; and 3) representatives from the private sector, NGOs and other sectors of civil society.

### **Outcome**

Firstly, an analytical summary of the presentations and discussions will be completed, which will capture the lessons that can be learned from the regional and country experiences. DESA will prepare this, in collaboration with UNESCO, ESCWA, and other potential partners. The summary will be presented and circulated during the ECOSOC high-level segment in July 2013. A senior representative of the host country will be invited to present the summary report. Similarly, the examples of best practices and any case studies presented would be made available at the AMR session, as well as disseminated through the ECOSOC website (through an open database).

Secondly, the meeting will provide an important opportunity for key policy makers to develop new partnerships – both North-South and South-South – which could be announced at the AMR session in July 2013.

Finally, the event will identify follow-up actions to be undertaken by the relevant stakeholders within the region in furtherance of the particular theme.

### **Suggested logistical arrangements**

The Meeting will be held for a half-day in Amman, Jordan on 26 November 2012. It will be hosted by the Government of Jordan (tbc), in collaboration with the United Nations represented by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other relevant partners.

Suggested participants (70-80) would include the following:

1. Government representatives from the Western Asia region;
2. One Member of the ECOSOC Bureau
3. Officials from the United Nations
4. Representatives of other multilateral institutions, civil society and the private sector