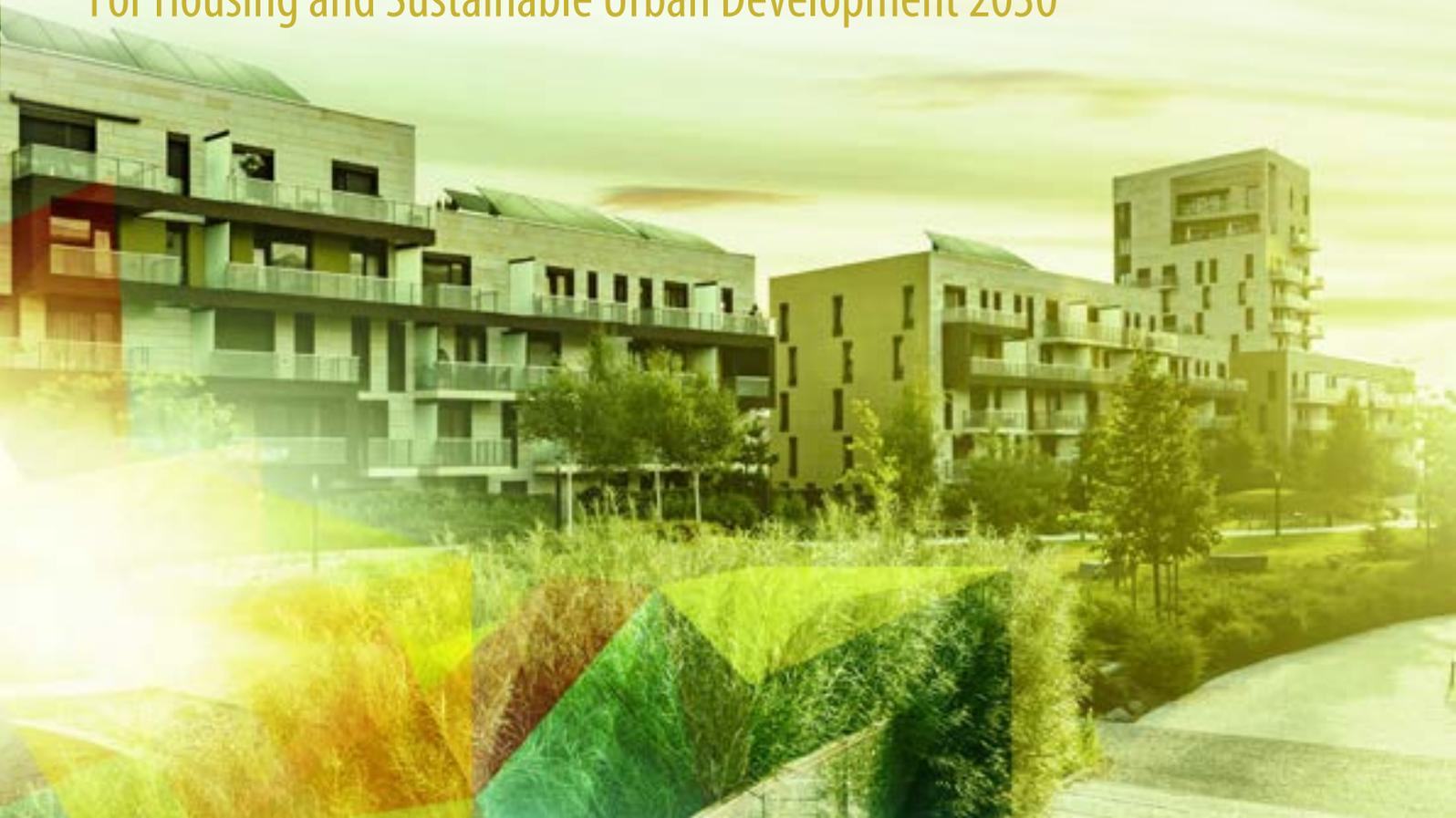League of Arab States

Arab Strategy
For Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030

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CONTENTS

Preamble

The 30th Arab Council for Housing and Construction (AMCHC) session endorsed the preparation of an Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development ("Strategy"), whereas the League of Arab States (LAS) General Secretariat gives special attention to developing strategies and programs of actions to achieve sustainable development in the Arab States, with the technical support of United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat).

A Task Force composed of seven country representatives from the Scientific Technical Committee of the Department for Environment and Housing (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Democratic People›s Republic of Algeria, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Sudan, Republic of Iraq, State of Libya and Arab Republic of Egypt) prepared the Strategy. Representatives from all twenty-two Arab countries[1] , in cooperation with LAS and the UN-Habitat, reviewed the document for refinement and agreement over a framework for all Arab States efforts. Further technical review by relevant units of UN-HABITAT was facilitated through the Regional Office of Arab States (ROAS).

On the international level, the Strategy represents a methodology for identifying the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Arab Region, in particular SDG11: **"Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable"** in addition to other related sustainable development goals, that can be achieved through addressing the key housing and urbanization challenges towards a New Urban Agenda for the Arab States.

The Strategy proposes a set of goals and targets to develop the sector of housing and other relevant sectors to achieve integrated, inclusive and sustainable urbanization at the Arab regional level, to be adapted and developed according to the specific context of each country at the national level.

The 29th session of AMCHC (December 2012) confirmed the establishment of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD). UN-Habitat's 24th Governing Council (GC) recognized the importance of cooperation between the League of Arab States' department for Environment, and Housing and UN-Habitat ROAS, through AMFHUD, for achieving the goals of sustainable urbanization in the Arab States.

1The 22 Arab states in Arabic alphabetical order are: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, the Democratic People's Republic of Algeria, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Sudan, Federal Republic of Somalia, Republic of Iraq, Sultanate of Oman, State of Palestine, State of Qatar, The Union of Comoros, State of Kuwait, Republic of Lebanon, State of Libya, Arab Republic of Egypt, Kingdom of Morocco, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Republic of Yemen.

Executive Summary

The Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development is considered to be a framework for joint Arab action in housing and sustainable urban development, and an important step to strengthen regional cooperation in the Arab region. It aims to propose strategic goals and targets to develop the housing sector, address future challenges and achieve sustainable urban development through connecting them to the concept of urban planning and promote community participation in development and decision making. The strategy covers the urban geographical scope of the Arab region that comprises of Twenty-two Arab states[2].

This strategy derives its importance from two key elements; first, the need to create an urban development system at the regional level, and second, the necessity to enhance cooperation among Arab states to exchange experiences. Various positive outcomes are expected from this strategy and are divided into short-term or medium-term. The most important and instant outcomes are the consolidation of the concepts and standards of urban development and sustainable housing in Arab states; learning from previous successful experiences; and integrating the goals of economic, social, environmental, and urban policies; as well as connecting to the global trends.

On the medium term, positive results lie in the efforts of each State to preserve and optimize the use of resources, improve livelihood and quality of life, reduce poverty and develop informal areas through addressing the developmental gaps among Arab states.

To understand the current status of urban development, issues and challenges associated with the following sectors were identified:
Housing, basic services and infrastructure / Urban Demographics / Land and Planning / Urban Administration and Legislations / Urban Environmental Sustainability and Climate Changes/ Productivity and Urban Economy

The future vision is dedicated to ensure:
"Integrated and sustainable human settlements that are resilient, competitive, and capable of providing better life standards in the Arab region".

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2 And rural and remote areas as appropriate.

1 Introduction

To achieve that vision, six principal objectives enclosing thirty-five goals in all the urban development fields associated with and quality of life in residential areas were formulated. Objectives include **access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, achieve prosperity, attain equity in development and social integration, plan integrated and sustainable human settlements in all Arab states, Implement principles of good urban governance and build capacities to plan and manage human settlements, improve urban environmental sustainability, enhance adaptive capacity to climate change and protection of natural resources, boost the productivity of cities to achieve economic growth and sustainable development on the national and regional levels.**

The strategy covers a time frame of fifteen years to 2030 and will be subject to review every five years. It will be followed by an implementation plan for five years. Implementation mechanisms of the strategy occur at three levels:
- National mechanisms: These mechanisms are established by every state depending on its peculiarities and priorities, while indicators to measure sustainability shall be indicated.

- Regional mechanisms: At the level of all Arab states to allow for coordination and achieve integration among them.

- Participatory mechanisms with UN Habitat through the ROAS.

The strategy concludes on the importance of coordination and integration, whereas Arab states will be considered to be part of a whole.

Each state will set out its own mechanisms and priorities in the framework of the vision and the strategy. Besides, national strategies would be integrated with regional objectives aligned with the 2030 sustainable development agenda.

The Arab Home is home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world and the most urbanized. Urban population in Arab countries grew by more than four times during the period of 1970 to 2010. As of 2010, the Arab population was estimated at 357 million people, 56 per cent of whom live in cities. By 2030, it is expected to increase to 487 million people, 63 per cent of whom will live in cities and margins. Therefore, achieving sustainable development is vital to accommodate rapid urbanization in a positive manner. Many Arab countries have realized significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the region, particularly in health and education. However, economic growth was limited during the nineties of the past century and early years of the 20th century, probably in result of the recent global economic crisis, lack of peace and security and continuation of foreign occupation in some Arab lands. Across the region, around 18 per cent live under the poverty line, with significant economic disparities among Arab countries. With 60 per cent of the population below 25 years of age, most Arab countries confront the challenge of providing adequate employment opportunities for youth[3]. Despite the large investments in infrastructure in most of the Arab countries, the improvement in housing, food subsidies, water and energy, many have been suffering from the impact of rising food and energy prices besides the provision of affordable housing. Significant disparities continue to exist between rural and urban areas as well as between the least developed, mid and high-income countries. In this regard, "The Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development" provides an Arab vision for housing and urban development to enhance Arab solidarity and cooperation and bolster regional economic integration in order to deliver good quality of life for Arab citizens in their home countries and help the region occupy prestigious position worldwide. The Strategy serves as a framework for joint Arab action in the sectors of housing and sustainable urban development. It is based on a number of key references at the international and regional levels. In the framework of this strategy, an analysis of the Arab urbanization was carried out based on relevant quantitative indicators, an analysis of response to a questionnaire implemented in Arab countries, and the discussions and outcomes of a participatory workshop to consider the common challenges and objectives. While the challenges and objectives were classified according to the thematic areas of the State of the World's Cities Report 2013/2012 which proposes the City Prosperity Index[4] (CPI), and defines a prosperous city as one that provides (1) productivity, (2) infrastructure development, (3) quality of life, (4) equity and social inclusion, and (5) environmental sustainability, taking into account the specificity of each Arab state and focusing on common challenges.This strategy comes in line with several Arab documents and strategies relevant to sustainable development in Arab states; the most important of which is the Arab Strategic Framework for sustainable development 2025 – 2015, approved by the Arab League summit in Baghdad 2012.

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[3] *Statistical data source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*
[4] *CPI is a new tool introduced by the UN-Habitat in 2012 to achieve prosperity in urban areas. It helps cities to move towards more economically, socially, politically and environmentally prosperous urban future. It measures the cities current and future progress towards prosperity, and helps decision-makers make good political decisions.*

2   Urban Challenges in the Arab Region

2.1 Housing, Basic Services and Infrastructure

The sector of housing, basic services and infrastructure is considered to be one of the key sectors in achieving sustainable urban development and requires effective and feasible policies and strategies that enable adequate housing for all and sustainable urban development in the Arab region. In this regard, the Arab Charter on Human Rights, approved in Tunis on 2004 and entered into force on 2008, states in its 38th Article, "Every person has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, which ensures their well-being and a decent life, including food, clothing, housing, services and the right to a healthy environment. The States parties shall take the necessary measures commensurate with their resources to guarantee these rights" Accordingly, some Arab countries have made significant progress in increasing the supply of affordable housing, and eradicating informal and poor areas through upgrading and resettlement programs, and in partnership with between public institutions and the private sector. In general, the supply of formal housing for low and middle income categories has decreased in many Arab countries as a result of the absence of housing finance mechanisms, except for the highest income levels, in addition to the limited capacity of public private partnerships to provide adequate housing and the increasing housing prices owing to the imbalance between supply and growing demand, compounded by the rising speculation, lengthy and exorbitant property registration process and legal barriers to mortgage lending. In consequence, the constant population increase drived urban pressures to hazardous or unsafe areas or substandard buildings.   On other hand, social housing programs have been criticized in some countries for selecting far distant sites from employment, basic, commercial and public services, insufficient public transport and incomplete facilities. Governments in most Arab countries encounter predominantly the challenge of providing urban basic services and infrastructure to keep with the increasing urbanization trends. Cities lack recourses and management capacities to cope with increasing demand for drinking water and sanitation, energy, public transport, public facilities and healthcare and education facilities, most evidently in rural areas.

Key housing, basic services and infrastructure issues can be summed up as follows:
* Public Sector inability to meet the growing needs for housing
* Increase in the costs of serviced land, ready for housing
* Lack of finance mechanisms
* Inconsistency between access to basic services and international planning standards.
* Increasing gap between the demand and supply of housing for low-income group and poor distribution of units
* Lack of management system for the housing stock to ensure maintenance and exploitation of all vacant units
* Lack of integration between housing and employment opportunities

* Lack of provision of housing for middle and low income groups by the private sector
* Poor partnership between public and private sectors in providing infrastructure
* Spread of housing unit ownership pattern, and limited safe, affordable rental stock
* High prices of construction materials and poor use of modern and sustainable building technologies
* A proportion of the population do not have access to safe water and adequate sanitation
* Lack of efficiency and adequacy of public transport and road networks

2.2 Urban Demographics

Some Arab States set strategies to dedicate investments for secondary and new cities to improve urban-rural economic links and achieve equitable economic development across countries. However, uneven development persists as a major challenge facing most countries of the region, given the limited outcomes of the formal rural development plans. Most of the urban dwellers in Arab states live in major urban communities that offer job opportunities and social services, resulting in rural migration and people movement from small cities to medium and large cities. Social transformations and uneven economic development have led to an increase in labor migration within and across the Arab countries, in addition to displacement induced by political instability or climatic conditions as the natural and manmade disasters, as well as foreign occupation, degradation of security in numerous Arab and neighboring countries. Immigration within and across the countries has ensued the spread of informal settlements on urban peripheries, urban encroachment on agricultural land and growing urbanization rates that breach the balance in the distribution of population density. Moreover, social inequality is another challenge in the region, mostly in Arab cities, with the high unemployment especially amongst females, the marginalization of groups like the elders, the persons with disabilities, and the limited education options for low-income due to the low government expenditure on education. With approximately 60 per cent of the population below the age of 25, most Arab countries suffer from limited employment opportunities for youth, lack of resources and supporting mechanisms, besides exclusion from decision-making processes. Hence, strengthening youth role should be reconsidered to empower them to participate in development and decrease the negative effects such as the spread of violence and terrorism, and also encourage women role in development.

Important urban demographic issues can be summed up as follows:
* Imbalance in population density distribution.
* Increase in rural-urban immigration.
* Displacement caused by occupation, security issues, and natural and manmade disasters
* Limited women and youth contribution to the development process.
* Rural-urban imbalance in the development process.
* Increasing poverty rates in urban areas.
* High rates of population growth.

2.3 Land and Planning

Some Arab countries have implemented inclusive and integrated approach for the planning of new cities as a driver for economic development. They started to connect housing with employment and provide sustainable transportation through metropolitan planning. They attempted as well to prepare strategic urban planning plans for cities with thorough consultation of development partners to achieve local development objectives, empower civil society organizations and increase the participation of the private sector in implementing cities, settlements and regional plans, and ensure their sustainability taking into consideration historical and archeological sites. Research in some countries revealed the need to connect the economic planning with the sustainable urban planning, urban management and basic services.

The discrepancy between the institutional structures and the theoretical curricula for sustainable urban planning remains problematic. Arab countries suffer usually of lack of integrated systems for land and property management, affordable land prices, and protection of natural resources for hazardous encroachment on agriculture land in some countries.

The LAS in its Charter on Human Rights (Article 31, 2004) states that "everyone has a guaranteed right to own private property, and shall not under any circumstances be arbitrarily or unlawfully divested of all or any part of his property"

With the horizontal expansion of urban communities, population density decreases, class stratification increases as the low-income people move to the informal and slum areas lacking formal tenure, basic services and adequate infrastructure.

Important land and planning issues can be summed up as follows:
- Expansion of big cities
- Diminishing of agricultural land as a result of urban growth
- Urban mutilation
- Spread of slums and informal areas
- Lack of conservation of archaeological and heritage sites
- High land prices
- Deterioration of old neighbourhoods
- Lack of national and regional plans at some countries

2.4 Urban Administration and Legislations

The shortage of institutional and legislative structures in many Arab countries is one of the reasons behind the increase of unplanned urbanization effects, given the limited coordination between the different ministries and institutions relevant to urban development, at the central and local levels.

Efforts to strengthen the capacity of local authorities to enhance decentralization are still restrained. Usually, the central technical bodies in the Arab states develop urban policies and plans while local authorities are concentrated on the implementation of local plans only. The latter usually lack the human resources necessary to plan and manage urban growth.
Local authorities also rely on funds from central or regional governments to finance their investments and activities. This leads to partial erosion of the benefits of participatory local administration.

The deficit of accurate and comparable data for urban development trends at the regional level confines the vision for regional development. There is also a need for necessary analyzes to support decision-making process.
Other challenges include the underdevelopment of planning and construction legislations to adapt to the changing urban context in the Arab region, the inadequate institutional capacities and financial resources in addition to the lack of monitoring and supervision capacities of local administration.

Important administrative and legislations issues can be summed up as follows:
- Poor coordination and overlap between the different levels in development and planning fields
- Poor monitoring and enforcement of legislations
- Planning legislations lagging behind urban developments
- Shortage of urban, housing and environmental observatories, and difficulty of information management
- Limited implementation of participatory approach in legislation, construction laws and urban planning systems,
- The importance of enacting legislation for planning and sustainable building systems.
- Sustainability not taken into consideration in legislation, construction laws and urban planning systems.
- Lack of trained calibres in urban and environment fields

2.5 Environmental and Urban Sustainability and Climate Change

Hitherto, environmental awareness has not been widely spread across the Arab region, echoed in poor response to international environment standards. Furthermore, there is a lack and weak enforcement of environmental legislations and regulations for the protection of natural environment and biodiversity.

Water scarcity is also threatening the Arab region as it has the least water resources per capita in the world. Groundwater reserves and aquifers are depleted at alarming rates. Sea level rise could affect many coastal cities. The temperature increase caused by the climate change may also decrease precipitation and aggravate water scarcity droughts and severe droughts, with adverse impact on agricultural production. The main challenge of water resources scarcity and desertification is the shortage of food security. Although greenhouse emissions in the Arab Region are not more than %4.8 of the total world emissions and Arab states are not historically responsible for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, they seek to reduce emissions by diversifying their energy sources and the use of renewable sources, despite their increasing burden and in line with joint responsibility principle as well as burdens disparity. Nevertheless, Arab countries are challenged by other priorities such as the development through industrial expansion, population growth, and improvement of livelihoods leading to the growth of vehicles use compounded by poor public transport and ageing vehicles in some countries.

Energy consumption has also increased as a result of population and economic growth, industrial development, rising standards of living and urbanization, with no sufficient generation of clean energy, or utilization of local and environmentally sustainable building materials. Besides, the absence of an integrated system for solid waste and wastewater collection, treatment and safe disposal in a number of Arab states has led to health and environmental problems.

Important environmental urban sustainability and climate change issues can be summed up as follows:

*   Desertification and water scarcity
*   Limited reliance on new and renewable energy sources
*   Limited interest into climate change impact on cities
*   Poor participation of the private sector in the environment field
*   Lack of an integrated system for the collection and treatment of hazardous waste and solid waste
*   Inadequate disaster risk reduction system.
*   Water and air pollution
*   Alarming depletion of natural resources
*   Poor response to international environmental standards or localization of eco-friendly technologies

2.6 Productivity and Urban Economy

Arab countries have undertaken coherent national policies to enhance the competitiveness of cities as engines of economic growth, with emphasis on secondary cities to alleviate pressure on the primate cities. All Arab governments recognize the importance of the city as a magnet for investment and a source of job creation and poverty alleviation. Moreover, many Arab cities have promoted their potential as destinations for international tourism based on their natural and cultural heritage assets, and their role as education hubs, scientific research centers or financial capitals. Cultural heritage initiatives seek to reinforce the cultural identity of Arab cities and maximize the cultural tourism potential to generate economic growth and create jobs.Drawing on these investments will boost city competitiveness and contribute significantly to economic growth and job creation. However, poor organization and management in infrastructure and housing projects, in addition to the urban sprawl, is changing the landscape of Arab cities at the expense of cultural and natural heritage.Even though recent economic growth rates in a number of Arab countries have exceeded the global average, national economies are currently highly non-diversified. Furthermore, the political instability in the region, and insecurity are affecting foreign direct investment. Arab states are incapable of providing employment opportunities for large sections of the population. Hence, employment became a strategic objective for most countries, with a focus on youth, as there is often a mismatch between educational qualifications of young graduates and available opportunities within the labor market. The informal sector represents one of the sources of local resources if adequately integrated in formal systems. Still, low property registration rates and high levels of informality have prevented local authorities and central governments from deriving property related resources.

The economic dependency on natural resources, especially oil and gas as well as the reliance on imported food imports and global food chains increases the vulnerability of the region to economic shocks given the fluctuations in international prices; with severe repercussions on employment, economic growth and stability and the environment, which in turn affects the housing sector. At the regional level, regional trade and economic complementarity are underdeveloped, as well as technical and financial regional cooperation.

Productivity and Urban Economy Issues can summed as follows:

*   Inefficient utilization of available resources
*   Poor economic diversity
*   The growth of the informal economy with no proper government consideration
*   Poor intra trade and economic integration
*   High unemployment rates, especially among females and youth
*   The limited developmental role of the banking sector
*   The mismatch between graduates' qualifications and available job opportunities

3 The Strategy

3.1 Vision

The vision serves as a framework adopted by the Arab countries at the institutional level, with the collaboration of Arab, regional and international organizations, bodies and various segments of society including the civil society and the private sector, and in line with the human right to development stated in Article 37 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights. It portrays better future prospects, and aims to develop integrated, inclusive and sustainable cities and human settlements capable of delivering a better quality of life for all citizens, access to adequate and sustainable housing for all categories. It emphasizes strong urban-rural linkages, implements rules of good governance and resilience while preserving the Arab cultural identity, and strives to achieve the SDGs. Many Arab countries have adopted national visions within that framework already to develop its housing sector and achieve sustainable development. Thus, each country must take into consideration the necessity to formulate future plans and programs ensuring compatibility between its national vision and strategy with the Arab vision and strategy which aims to establish:

> **Integrated and sustainable human settlements that are resilient, competitive, and capable of providing better life standards in the Arab region.**

3.2 Purpose of the Strategy

The Strategy covers all the Arab states, building on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals in the region, the targets set in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and their implementation across the Arab region, with a particular focus on the Sustainable Development Goal 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" as well as other relevant SDGs. The Strategy represents a corner stone for sustainable urbanization in the Arab region. On one hand, it enacts and encourages coordination, cooperation and integration between Arab states on key issues related to housing and sustainable urban development at the regional level, capitalizing on the comparative advantage offered by

each country. On the other hand, it addresses the various pillars of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental) as well as the challenges of housing, infrastructure and sustainable urbanization, at the country level. The Strategy provides a regional reference plan, offering advice and guidance to the housing and urban management professionals, national and local governments in collaboration with the civil society, academia and the private sector to design development plans for housing and sustainable urban development at the national level in light of the regional development requirements and priorities. The strategy also aims at preparing a general structure for the urban and housing indicators database in line with the specificity of the Arab region, and the international context. Moreover, it aspires to assist in reevaluating the local administration principles and standards, and steer it towards decentralization to develop urban management in Arab countries. The Strategy stimulates the sharing of experiences, best practices and cooperation among those working on formulating effective national strategies, to encourage sustainable policies and practices in all fields challenging Arab countries. Among these policies, the integration in the field of human and financial resources, housing and infrastructure, technical labor within the Arab countries and at the regional level, in addition to the institutionalization of the housing and urban development sector in the Arab region in conformity with the global urban development principles.

3.3 Objectives and Goals

The Strategy concentrates on creating livable and optimally productive human settlements, offering sustainable development for all residents. This requires an efficient management of cities to be economically competitive with high living standards. Although many cities are considering social cohesion and increasing productivity within countries, most Arab settlements still need to address deficiencies in infrastructure and housing and move forward toward sustainable urban management. Therefore, it is vital to improve the overall regulatory environment for housing and urban development, to secure better quality of life, social equity and, in particular, services to the poor. This environment must enhance quality of life in the settlements (infrastructure and housing delivery, revitalization of heritage sites), their management (capacity building of local authorities and strengthening their financial viability) and fiscal decentralization (housing and local authorities finance). The objectives and goals apply differently in the Arab states according to their geographical disparities and development levels, entailing the necessity for each country to adapt these objectives as per their needs and gaps in a cooperation framework among them.

Objective 1:
Ensuring access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and prosperous living for all

Goals:
1. Facilitating access to adequate and sustainable housing for all economic groups in different ways.
2. Providing and upgrading basic services.
3. Providing and upgrading the management of infrastructure and facilities, and encouraging the participation of the private sector.
4. Providing the necessary support to build and finance housing through innovative and sustainable methods.
5. Providing safe public transport networks within cities and their extensions.
6. Applying public health principles in Arab human settlements.
7. Ensuring safety and security of the communities.

Strategies:
- Formulating or updating National housing policies to ensure adequate housing including affordable options
- Encouraging private sector participation in the provision of low and middle income housing
- Developing programs for low-cost housing and supporting low and medium income groups, with the involvement of the private sector
- Empowering youth and women to access land and official tenure
- Developing national policies for the utilization of vacant housing units.
- Applying green and sustainable building technologies, and encouraging the use of local building material.
- Raising the efficiency of educational services and eliminating or reducing illiteracy.
- Raising the efficiency of health services and expanding its access to include all society.
- Preparing national plans to confront endemic diseases (hepatitis - malaria - etc.)
- Improving sanitation services in the cities.
- Developing policies and strategies to enforce security in the cities.
- Designing transport and traffic policies, and providing public transport networks to ensure cities sustainability.
- Improving the waste management systems.

Objective 2:
Ensuring equity and social integration

Goals:
8. Achieving rural-urban balanced development.
9. Empowering all community groups to participate in the development process (Including vulnerable groups, with a focus on women, youth, children, the elderly and people with special needs).
10. Managing migration, displacement and asylum data in order to avoid pressure on cities and available resources.

Strategies:
- Increasing support and raising the efficiency of services in rural areas to reduce migration to cities.
- Providing job opportunities outside the primate cities to reduce immigration.
- Endorsing the efforts of Arab governments to empower all society categories to participate in management of the development process.
- Implementing economic and social empowerment policies and relying on of civil society organizations.
- Considering rural areas in the national urban policies.
- Mapping social marginalization and urban vulnerability at the national level to take into account the relevant urban areas.

Objective 3:
Planning integrated and sustainable human settlements in all states in the Arab region

Goals:
11. Maximizing the exploitation of the strategic location of the Arab region regionally and internationally.
12. Exploiting uninhabited areas in the development process
13. Balancing the hierarchical structure of human settlements at national levels.
14. Reducing the spread of slums, and upgrading the existing ones.
15. Developing neighbourhoods and districts according to the sustainable urbanization standards.
16. Providing open and safe public spaces, and setting planning and design standards for them.
17. Developing inclusive plans for the cities to achieve green development requirements and quality of life.

Strategies:
- Formulating national policies for the development of land, cities and regions.
- Stimulating the provision of serviced land to all and linking them to the plans and employment opportunities.
- Supporting and implementing slum upgrading programs through participatory approach
- Developing plans for medium and small cities and villages through participatory approach.
- Developing urban expansion plans and increasing density in the planned extensions.
- Re-organizing land for cities' expansion and the development of residential areas.
- Identifying mechanisms for the implementation of plans.
- Planning centrally and implementing locally with the participation of civil society
- Linking funding mechanisms to strategic spatial plans.
- Increasing public and open spaces in existing and new cities.

Objective 4:
Applying the principles of good urban management, and capacity building for planning and managing human settlements

Goals:
18. Providing and managing information
19. Providing legislation, regulatory structures and supporting systems for housing and urban development institutions
20. Effective cooperation and coordination among administration levels, with the community participation
21. Implementing decentralization in financing cities and local communities, as required.
22. Capacity building and training local authorities, to provide human resources capable of implementation and monitoring.

Strategies:
- Finalizing the Arab Urban Observatories system and establishing a regional observatory for Housing and Urban Development to support the Information Management
- Building technical and technological capacities of municipalities through exchanging expertise in housing and urban development fields.
- Establishing an integrated system for capacity building and human development in the field of housing, and urban development at the local, national and regional levels.
- Strengthening local revenue generation and independence of local financial management
- Finalizing the code and assessment systems related to urbanization.
- Reviewing, updating and evaluating planning regulations and organizational structures
- Managing land at the city scale to ensure better distribution of services and optimal use of land
- Training professionals on sustainable and energy saving building technologies
- Providing legislative and institutional framework for the development and support of decision-making processes
- Coordinating the support of donors for strategic projects and initiatives.
- Supporting Arab professional organizations and institutions that work in scientific research in the field of housing and urban development, to exchange expertise and skills among Arab states.
- Monitoring the progress through City Prosperity Initiative
- Designing technical education and university curricula in urban planning and management in line with the developments in sustainable building technology.

Objective 5:
Improving urban environmental sustainability and resilience against climate change, and preserving natural resources

Goals:
23. Using appropriate techniques for the conservation of environment in accordance with international standards
24. Expanding the use of new and renewable energy resources and eco-friendly technologies
25. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions, and the ecological footprint of urbanization
26. Developing contingency plans for disaster response, reducing urban environmental risks and be prepared for them.

Strategies:
- Spreading awareness about environmental issues and the effects of climate change on urban communities, especially in the building sector.
- Supporting projects to increase the energy efficiency of buildings through the participation of the private sector.
- Giving priority to saving communities and buildings at risk (Spillways - floods - landslides – etc.)
- Committing to solid waste sorting as a first stage in the reuse and recycling system.
- Evaluating and delimiting urban environmental risks and developing contingency plans for urban risks.
- Raising the efficiency of response to urban risks.
- Increasing the reliance on eco-friendly public transportation.
- Inventing new approaches to improve solid waste management in the cities.
- Providing laws and regulations regarding biodiversity.
- Providing institutional and legislative framework for disaster risk management and a mitigation budget.
- Activating Arab action plan to address climate change themes approved in 2012.
- Activating Arab strategy for sustainable production and consumption approved in 2009 (regarding housing and sustainable urban development)
- Activating the Arab strategy for disaster risk reduction approved in the Arab Summit in Baghdad 2012 (regarding housing and sustainable urban development)

Objective 6:
Enhancing cities productivity to achieve economic growth and sustainable development at the national and regional levels

Goals:
27. Optimizing the utilization of available resources in an integrated manner nationally and regionally.
28. Encouraging the participation of private sector in development
29. Supporting and encouraging scientific research and development to support productivity.
30. Providing job opportunities and reducing unemployment.
31. Reliance on the principles of green economy to enhance productivity.
32. Empowering all local community categories to improve its economics and livelihoods.
33. Improving local funding for municipalities, and transforming frozen assets into economic engines.
34. Making the cities more attractive and productive, to achieve an advanced rank in the Global City Index
35. Encouraging sustainable industrial development in Arab states.

Strategies:
- Encouraging local economy diversity.
- Preparing green economy strategies, policies and initiatives.
- Facilitating the effective allocation of limited national resources as per priorities.
- Providing legislations and incentives to encourage the participation of the private sector in the development.
- Providing and exchanging opportunities for researchers and innovators to apply the scientific research outputs in Arab states.
- Encouraging eco and socially responsible investment and develop regulations and policies for sustainable investment
- Taking inventory and classification of resources at the national level to utilize them at the regional level.
- Matching the qualifications of graduates with job opportunities at national and regional levels.
- Linking urban development with economic strategies of each state.
- Integrating the global system as an inclusive development network and attracting investments to promote development in the Arab world.

4 Implementation Mechanisms

The Strategy covers a time period of fifteen years to the end of 2030. It is considered as a guiding document for national governments towards more inclusive, integrated and sustainable human settlements in the Arab region.

It will be reviewed in light of the recommendations of the HABITATIII conference, incorporating the outcomes of the negotiations of the New Urban Agenda, besides the Sustainable Development Goals which will inspire a new urban agenda for the Arab region.

Thereafter, the Strategy will be reviewed periodically for a period no more than five years, to evaluate the accomplishment of the expected objectives and goals. The Strategy conforms with the Arab Framework for Sustainable Development 2030, approved by the Arab Summit of Baghdad in 2012.

The implementation mechanisms of the Strategy target both the regional and national levels. Regional mechanisms have the purpose of coordination, dialogue and integration of all Arab states, while national mechanisms address the challenges of each country along with its socio-economic and cultural specificities.

Encouraged by LAS, countries are requested to dedicate significant efforts to develop Housing and Urban Development Strategies taking the overall Arab Strategy as guideline and cooperation framework.

Each country develops an action plan to activate the Strategy, define priorities and propose implementation, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms in line with its inputs, paving the way towards HABITATIII and the integrated representation of the Arab region.

LAS along with the UN-Habitat provide technical support and facilitate the exchange of opinions, ideas and experiences concerning implementation mechanisms and indicators at the national level.

4.1 National Mechanisms

National governments play a critical role in adopting the 2030 Development Agenda and implementing objectives and goals of the Strategy. Sub-national governments assume responsibilities, either directly or jointly with national governments and/or in partnership with communities, academia and private sector actors as well as relevant service providers for the SDGs.
Each country develops its national plans for implementing the Strategy through a participatory approach, according to its specificities. Ideas for projects or programmes can be suggested for the following institutions or in cooperation among one another: relevant ministries and institutions in the country; Arab, regional and international organizations; and National Consultative Technical Committee (CTC-N) for the Strategy implementation follow-up. The National Plan is discussed and approved by national ministries and institutions concerned with the Strategy implementation as per the particularity of each country. National conferences and events are encouraged to support innovative methods of linking national strategies to the Arab Strategy.

4.2 Regional Mechanisms

The Council of Arab Ministers for Housing and Construction is responsible for issuing necessary resolutions for bringing the appropriate guiding mechanisms into effect, which may include:
1. A Higher Committee (HC) steers and supervises the Strategy implementation, alongside the LAS Secretary General as Chairman and AMCHC as members, in addition to Directors of relevant Arab organizations; and it is suggested for the HC to convene once annually.

2. A Regional Consultative Technical Committee (CTC-R) headed by the Technical Secretariat of AMCHC and staffed by high-ranking officials from Ministries of Housing and Urbanization in Arab countries and UN-Habitat ROAS. It will be charged of examining project or programme proposals and approving projects and plans at the regional level. It monitors achievements and offer recommendations and suggestions to the relevant bodies. The CTC holds regular semi-annual meetings, preferably before HC meetings.

3. A dedicated technical entity within the AMCHC follows the implementation of the Strategy and acts as a Secretariat to the HC and CTC, referring to the AMCHC.

4. A Regional Observatory for Housing and Urban Development (RUO), to be established under the supervision of AMCHC, and in consultation with national governments, which is responsible for supporting the completion of National Urban Observatory (NUO) systems in Arab countries at first stage. Then, RUO is responsible for identifying, collecting and coordinating the information required from NUOs and measuring the progress towards achieving goals through an agreed set of indicators.

5. It is also tasked of establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the implementation of the Strategy, in close cooperation with all partners (ESCWA and UN-Habitat) and regional institutions engaged in promoting sustainable urban development in the Arab region. This includes the Arab Towns Organization (ATO), the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), and the Urban Observatory for Arab Cities (ATUO) and other relevant entities. The observatory will also monitor the progress achieved in the indicators and provide analyses and support to decision makers. Each state will submit an annual report to the regional observatory, upon which an Arab regional report will be prepared.

6. Arab states (relevant ministries) nominate specific bodies to supervise Strategy implementation. It also undertakes the coordination and follow-up at the national level, especially with the CTC and the Strategy unit in AMCHC. Organizations, foundations and other implementation partners nominate Liaison Officers for coordination and follow-up.

7. Given the similarities of challenges in the region, it is expected that a number of Communities of Practice (COP) can be formed in order to exchange approaches, methodologies, legislations and suggestions on institutional structures as well as collaborate in the implementation of common actions. Each CoP determines modalities of exchanging information and frequency and structure of meetings.

8. Under the auspices of LAS, the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD) launched in 2015, comprises Ministers from each member state mandated to work in the urban environment, and will be organized every two years. The achievement of the Strategy indicators will be presented at the AMFHUD, and side meetings of CoPs will take place to reflect on progress and support forward action.

4.3 Participation Mechanisms of UN-Habitat through ROAS

Based on the tasks entrusted to the UN-Habitat, enumerated in the 2014- 2019 Strategic Plan, the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States will be the main partner for the Arab States in the implementation of this strategy. The strategy will also be implemented in cooperation with all United Nations organizations and other related international organizations interested in housing and Urban Development. The UN-Habitat shall address the specific conditions of each country, and provides technical support for the implementation of the objectives of the strategy. Upon the country's request, it contributes in:
- Supporting Policy development and implementation: In order to create empowering and integrated policies for economic opportunities, housing and official land tenure and provision of basic services.
- Encouraging Information and Knowledge exchange, and capacity building: at all levels to enhance regional, national and local level interventions in urban governance, and increase cooperation among them.
- Supporting implementation of new policies: to facilitate the intertwined process of policy development, capacity building and implementation approach to guarantee its coherence and synergy.

4.4 Further Steps

This strategy is a guiding document for the Member States; it will be updated and adapted as applicable. The Strategy will be followed by a detailed implementation plan and suggested monitoring indicators.

5   Annex - Team Work

Republic of Iraq	Engineer Estabraq Ibrahim Al Shawk- Senior Undersecretary of the Ministry of Reconstruction and Housing (Chairman of the Technical Committee for the Drafting of the Strategy) Mr. Samir Ibrahim Boshqa - Director General of the Technical Department in the ministry
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Engineer Soliman Alhasanat-Director of Strategic Planning Department / Housing and Urban Development General Authority
People›s Democratic Republic of Algeria	Omar Belhaj Eassa - Director General of Building and Achievement Techniques in the Ministry of Housing, Urbanization and City Ms. Jaliot Mahdia – Assigned to studies and summarizing, the Office of the Minister - Ministry of Housing, Urbanization and City
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Engineer Nasser Bin Abdullah Ala`mar- Director General of International Cooperation-Ministry of Housing
Republic of Sudan	Engineer Sabeel Abd Al-Rasoul Ishaq - Secretary General of the National Council for Urban Development
State of Libya	Engineer Ali Abdul Hafeez Ebhery - Undersecretary of the Ministry of Housing and Utilities Engineer Abdul Hafeez Abu Saif Al Mawdy - Secretary of the Managing Committee of the Urban Planning Authority Engineer Ibrahim Basheer Al Zain- Office Manager of the Ministry of Housing and Utilities
Arab Republic of Egypt	Engineer Hussain AlGebaly-Advisor to the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities Dr. Engineer Fahima Alshahed - Head of the Central Department of Regional Planning Centers - General Organization for Urban Planning Engineer Riham Ahmad Mohammad Bakr Ibrahim - Coordinator of the communication between the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities and the Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction

UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme-ROAS	Dr. Sahar Attyah	Professor of Urban Design and Planning, head of the Architecture Department - Faculty of Engineering- Cairo University
	Dyfed Aubrey	UN-Habitat/ROAS
	Katja Schaefer	UN-Habitat/ROAS
	Joana Ricart	UN-Habitat/ROAS
	Dr. Ahmad Shalaby	Urban development Professor - Architecture Department- Faculty of Engineering- Cairo University
	Engineer Heba A`mmar	Assistant lecturer - Faculty of Regional and Urban Planning-Cairo University
	Engineer Peter Adel	Teaching Assistant- Faculty of Regional and Urban Planning- Cairo University
Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Construction	Mrs. Shahira Hassan Wahbi	Chief of the department of Environment, Housing, Water Resources and Sustainable Development
	Mr. Waleed Alsayed Elarabi	Housing and urban development field - Environment, Housing, Water Resources and Sustainable Development Department
	Ms. Inas Abd El-Azeem Mustafa	Environment, Housing, Water Resources and Sustainable Development Department