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**Priority issues in achieving social development in the Arab region****Intergenerational justice: concept, dimensions and policy implications****Summary**

The concept of intergenerational justice and the rights of future generations have been invoked repeatedly in recent decades. Reference to them has found its way into constitutions, various international legal instruments and the declarations of major United Nations conferences and summits. However, justice between generations is still not as salient on national and international development agendas as other forms of social justice, particularly in the Arab region.

This document explains the concept of intergenerational justice and briefly reviews the main approaches that have addressed the duties and responsibilities of current generations towards the environment and future generations. It explores selected dimensions and measures of intergenerational justice that can be relevant to the Arab region, then proposes a set of recommendations on key interventions to mainstream intergenerational justice concerns in policymaking processes and to protect the rights of future Arab generations.

The Committee on Social Development is invited to review the document, discuss to which extent intergenerational justice meets the priorities of member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and provide comments and recommendations on the way forward in that regard.

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## Introduction

1. Intergenerational justice is the fair allocation of burdens and benefits across generations, where fairness entails that the pursuit of welfare by the present generation does not diminish the opportunities of succeeding generations for pursuing a good and decent life.<sup>1</sup> Simply put, intergenerational justice requires balancing the needs of current and future generations. In recent decades, there has been increasing awareness of the fact that such fairness is a prerequisite for both justice and sustainability. Indeed, while the development of modern technology has improved quality of life, unrestrained economic and technological practices have put the planet at risk. Compounded by poverty, inequality and wars, this risk threatens not only current generations but also future, unborn ones. Economic and social policies in areas such as taxation, national debt, infrastructure, education, and health policies also have far-reaching implications on future generations.
2. Increased awareness of the challenges of intergenerational justice has materialized in inclusion of the concept in recent international legal instruments and development frameworks. For example, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development<sup>2</sup> all aim to set the world on a new path to an equitable, sustainable and climate-resilient future and ensure the well-being of present and future generations.
3. Such issues of global nature are gaining importance in the Arab region. In recent decades, its development model has focused on economic growth, with most national policies and programmes geared towards achieving gains from extractive industries, without consideration for the implications of current production and consumption patterns on the environment and future generations. This unsustainable approach is particularly harmful in a context of political instability and conflict, high population growth, reduced economic diversification, increasing fiscal constraints and poor environmental management.
4. Against this backdrop, the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) presented a paper on “Social justice in the policies of Arab States” to the twenty-eighth ministerial session of the Commission, which convened in Tunis in September 2014,<sup>3</sup> to engage stakeholders in a dialogue on the concept and challenges of social justice, including intergenerational justice. In paragraph 19 of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region, outcome document of that session, member States stressed “the urgent need for policies to ensure the preservation and management of increasingly scarce natural resources, in a manner that respects the environment and guarantees intergenerational justice”.
5. The objective of the present document is to enhance awareness of intergenerational justice issues and their implications on achieving social justice and implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. It provides an overview of the main approaches to intergenerational justice. It then presents selected environmental, social and economic dimensions and measures of intergenerational justice that can be of relevance to the Arab region. It finally proposes measures that could be adopted by Arab States to promote intergenerational justice values and protect the rights of future Arab generations.

## I. FOUNDATIONS OF AND APPROACHES TO INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

### A. MAKING THE CASE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

6. Decades ago, increased environmental consciousness triggered a debate on intergenerational justice, which focused on the moral dimensions of justice between living and non-existing individuals. Do future, unborn generations hold rights in relation to present ones; or should present generations not execute actions that could harm future ones? While many people may intuitively agree that present generations have certain

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<sup>1</sup> [A/68/322](#).

<sup>2</sup> [A/RES/70/1](#), [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), and [A/CONF.227/20](#), respectively.

<sup>3</sup> [E/ESCWA/28/8](#).

obligations towards those of the future, assigning moral standing to and legal duties towards distant, non-existing people is very challenging.

7. One of the arguments against the principle of intergenerational justice is that one cannot have obligations against persons who, because they are not yet born, have no identifiable identity or needs to protect. This stance is questionable from the perspective of young persons: is it right for them to ‘inherit’ the greenhouse effect or the ozone hole, a heavy government debt, or a lower yield on their contributions to the pension system compared with that of previous generations? Other opponents of intergenerational justice argue that present political, social and economic concerns are far too pressing to worry about the future. Yet, some intellectuals and politicians have contended that intergenerational justice policies, concerned with the living conditions of individuals of the same generation at a given point in time, have no priority over intragenerational ones.

8. While arguments against intergenerational rights may have some elements of truth, few would disagree that our planet and its resources are in the custody of successive generations of humans, and that people who have ‘inherited’ the earth, have *the right* to enjoy and benefit from it, but are also *responsible* as guardians of it for future generations. This is a natural extension of the concept of human rights.

#### B. INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE IN INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

9. Concern for intergenerational equity has already been expressed in several religious and non-religious cultures, and has manifested itself through intergenerational solidarity and care for the common human heritage in many ways. After the Second World War, international instruments included such concern, most often in their preambles and without detailed consideration to concrete choices and implications in the body of the texts. For example, the 1945 United Nations Charter opens with the affirmation of determination to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”,<sup>4</sup> and the Preamble to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” as “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”.<sup>5</sup>

10. During the 1970s, international negotiations started reflecting increased concern for the impact of human action on posterity and its relationship with the natural environment. The 1972 Declaration of the United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment is perhaps the most explicit on the issue of safeguarding and improving the human environment for the benefit of present and future generations.<sup>6</sup> In 1992, during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, the global community, guided by the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future,<sup>7</sup> made a serious attempt at defining and implementing an international precautionary principle to safeguard the environment and promote intergenerational justice. Principle 3 of the Rio Declaration stated that “the right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations”.<sup>8</sup> ‘Generational enthusiasm’ was equally sustained in the period leading to the Rio+20 Conference, the outcome document of which, “The future we want”,<sup>9</sup> identifies younger generations as the custodians of the future and explicitly calls to foster intergenerational dialogue and solidarity.

11. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has recently confirmed the responsibilities of today’s generation toward future ones. In the Preamble, world leaders pledged “to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and

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<sup>4</sup> Available from [www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/preamble/index.html](http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/preamble/index.html).

<sup>5</sup> A/RES/217(III). Available from [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/).

<sup>6</sup> Available from [www.un-documents.net/unchedec.htm](http://www.un-documents.net/unchedec.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Also known as the 1987 Brundtland report. Available from [www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf](http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf). The 1992 Conference is in turn also known as the Earth Summit.

<sup>8</sup> A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I).

<sup>9</sup> Available from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/733FutureWeWant.pdf>.

taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations". It is important to note that the 2030 Agenda focuses not only on the environment, but also on the generational aspects of social and economic development, such as eradicating poverty, ensuring decent work for all, promoting access to essential services and reducing inequalities in all dimensions.

### C. PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

12. Philosophical approaches attempted to define the concept of intergenerational justice based on the relationship between present and future generations, and the relationship of the human species with the natural environment.

13. The *preservationist* approach contends that the present generation should conserve the resources of planet Earth for future generations. In that model, those generations benefit from the sacrifices made by previous ones. In contrast, the *opulence* approach argues that present generations should consume indefinitely because future generations may never exist, and pass on sufficient wealth so that their successors can bear the cost of remediation, if need be. This model ignores the impact of unsustainable consumption on the environment.

14. The *technology* model foresees that technology will undoubtedly enable humans to develop innovative alternatives for certain natural resources and use existing ones more efficiently. However, this model ignores the possibility that environmental deterioration may offset technological gains. The modernistic *environmental economic* model argues that present generations can fulfill their obligations to future generations by doing proper natural resource accounting and promoting green economics.

15. Other influential views have explored intergenerational justice in the context of equity and social justice, rather than in the context of the natural environment. For example, the *indirect reciprocity* theory argues that young generations should return to older ones what they have received from them. In the intergenerational context, the return is indirect in that what the young generations have received from their parents, they would return it to their children rather than to the parents. A different view is contended in the theory of *mutual advantage*, which argues against self-interest as a basis for justice and requires coexistence, a condition that cannot be met beyond the immediate next generation or two.

16. The *utilitarian* theory promotes the idea that justice is defined by what maximizes aggregate welfare. This implies that it does not matter how much benefit accrues to any given generation, as long as the total is as large as possible. Most philosophers, however, argue that any theory of justice must be concerned with the distribution of wealth among individuals and that extremes of inequality are unjust. A strong protection of self-ownership is advocated by the *libertarian philosophy*, which argues that social justice arises from the allocation of property. Although some libertarians rely strictly on a first come, first served basis for property allocation, many apply a *Lockean proviso*<sup>10</sup> of appropriation, allowed on the condition that "there is enough and as good left for others".

17. In his *Theory of Justice*,<sup>11</sup> Rawls proposes a two-stage model for intergenerational justice in which a compulsory accumulation phase is enabled first to allow the build-up of enough wealth to ensure minimal stability for just institutions in the future. After this point, accumulation ceases to be an obligation for current generations and a steady phase state begins.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the *just savings* approach argues that the main duty owed to future generations is the saving of sufficient material capital to maintain just institutions or fair systems of

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<sup>10</sup> Named after John Locke who believed that individuals could acquire property rights in previously unowned goods by "mixing their labour" with it and on the condition that an act of appropriation would not prejudice any other man.

<sup>11</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see Axel Gosseries, "Theories of intergenerational justice: a synopsis", *Sapiens*, vol. 1, No. 1 (May 2008).

governance over time. This includes for example saving in means of production, and in learning and education, to preserve gains in culture and society.

#### D. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERGENERATIONAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

18. Intergenerational justice has been associated with the environment and equity *between* generations while social justice has been associated with the broader issues of development and the fair distribution of wealth and opportunities *within* a generation. However, the two concepts are intimately connected, especially by the common challenges faced in their realization.

19. ESCWA defines social justice as “equal rights and access to resources and opportunities for all, men and women, paying particular attention to the removal of barriers that hinder the empowerment of disadvantaged groups to fulfil their potential to participate in decisions that govern their lives”.<sup>13</sup> In this context, social justice rests on the principles of equality, equity, rights and participation. Yet, social justice has also a temporal component. Poverty and inequality for example are at the core of the social justice agenda and they are often transmitted from parent to child.

20. Moreover, each of the principles on which social justice is based is inherent to most theories of intergenerational justice. Equality, for example, means that all human beings, regardless of when they are born, are entitled to care for and benefit from the natural capital.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the principle of equity assumes that each generation should provide its members with equitable, non-discriminatory access to the knowledge and resources enjoyed by previous generations and should preserve the opportunities of future generations, without precluding their choices.

21. Another key issue that reinforces the relationship between social and intergenerational justice is that of rights, especially, the right to a common heritage or patrimony. As outlined earlier, some scholars have argued that future persons cannot have rights because they do not yet exist and may never exist. Additionally, neither the number of future persons nor their needs and desires are known. While these arguments may constrain the determination of future generations' legal rights, moral rights would still prevail. If human rights apply to every individual, even those not yet born, then this imposes consequent obligations on living individuals.

22. The role of participatory mechanisms and civil society in achieving intergenerational justice is paramount. However, participation and civic engagement is perhaps the most challenging aspect of intergenerational justice because, by definition, future generations are not able to speak for themselves. While current generations can make decisions on their behalf, the quality of these decisions can be compromised by how little is known about future generations.

#### E. LINK BETWEEN INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

23. The concept of sustainable development is intrinsically linked to that of intergenerational justice. Ever since the term ‘sustainable development’ was coined in the 1987 Brundtland Report and taken up at the 1992 Earth Summit, there is general consensus on the fact that the central value of the Report’s definition of sustainable development is that of intergenerational justice, and that environmental sustainability and human well-being are interdependent. In this definition, sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the people of today, particularly the poor, without compromising the ability of the environment to meet both present and future needs. A characteristic that consolidates such a vision is the shift towards models of

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<sup>13</sup> E/ESCWA/28/8, para. 18.

<sup>14</sup> The term ‘natural capital’ has different interpretations depending on the context in which it is used. The International Institute for Sustainable Development defines natural capital as the world stock of land, air, water, living organisms and all formations of the earth’s biosphere that provide us with ecosystem goods and services essential for survival and well-being. Furthermore, it is the basis for all human economic activity. Available from [www.iisd.org/pdf/2008/natural\\_capital\\_approach.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2008/natural_capital_approach.pdf).

governance that entail a rebalancing of environmental, social and economic goals in the interest of present and future generations.

24. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda provide a framework to guide States towards policy choices that improve life for current and future generations and leave no one behind, including those living in the future. Addressing global challenges along the four dimensions of sustainable development, namely economic development, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and good governance, including peace and security, is key to that end. The concept of intergenerational justice cuts across different SDGs, including sustainable energy (Goal 7), sustainable consumption and production (Goal 12), climate action (Goal 13), and life below water (Goal 14) and on land (Goal 15), which have intrinsic linkages to the welfare of future generations. Other Goals, such as those that tackle poverty, inequalities, issues related to health and education, and peace and security, also clearly affect future generations.

## II. SELECTED DIMENSIONS AND MEASURES OF INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE IN THE ARAB REGION

25. A comprehensive study and measure of intergenerational justice is a complex task.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, a clear and precise set of indicators that measure all the dimensions of intergenerational justice is hard to determine. Moreover, in most cases, data on the selected indicators are not available and when they do exist, the different methodologies applied for collecting them limit comparability across countries.

26. This document adopts the Intergenerational Justice Index (IJI) to assess the situation of intergenerational justice in the Arab region. The IJI was developed in the context of the Bertelsmann Stiftung Sustainable Governance Indicators project, which has been examining the performance of countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in sustainable governance since 2009.<sup>16</sup> It comprises a set of indicators that represent the environmental, economic and social dimensions of the legacy left for future generations. They include natural environment, child poverty, public debt, and the generational bias of social spending. When data to construct the IJI are not fully available in the Arab region, this document presents a snapshot of alternative indicators, which are considered as good proxies to study the situation of the four IJI components.

### A. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

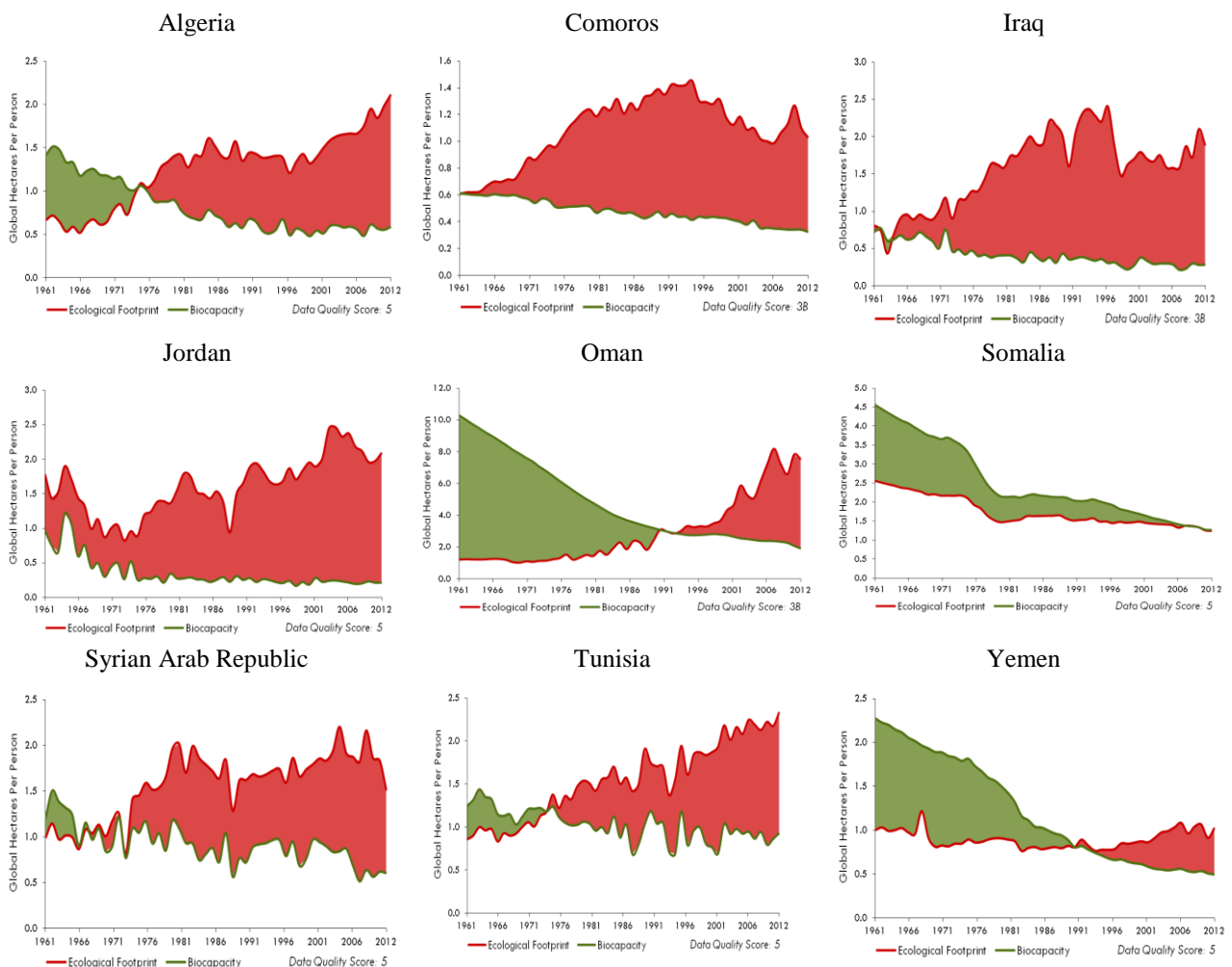
27. The IJI uses the ecological footprint and biocapacity indicators, both measured in global hectares, to determine the extent to which a given country is putting pressure on the natural environment. The ecological footprint is an indicator of the resources needed to produce all goods consumed by a given country and to absorb all wastes generated by the production of these goods. Biocapacity measures the ecological footprint relative to the actual capacity of the country's natural environment. These measures are available for nine Arab countries.

28. An analysis of data gathered from the Global Footprint Network in figure 1 shows that the ecological footprint has increased in selected Arab countries except for Oman, Somalia and Yemen. Critically, all countries (except Somalia) in the sample are ecological net debtors (shaded area in the graphs) that use more resources than what is renewably available within their own borders.

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<sup>15</sup> A more detailed discussion on the dimensions and measurement indicators of intergenerational justice in the Arab region is available in a paper by ESCWA on “Intergenerational justice: meeting the needs of future Arab generations” ([E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.3](#)).

<sup>16</sup> The Intergenerational Justice Index (IJI) assumes that intergenerational justice can only be achieved if performance is sustainable across the three dimensions. For more details, see Pieter Vanhuysse, *Intergenerational Justice in Aging Societies: A Cross-national Comparison of 29 OECD Countries* (Gütersloh, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013).

**Figure 1. Ecological footprint and biocapacity in selected Arab countries, 1961-2012**

Source: Data from the Global Footprint Network. Available from [www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN) (accessed 12 September 2016).

## B. CHILD POVERTY

29. Child poverty is an important measure of the life chances of the next generation. High levels of child poverty can have strong negative implications for future education, health, job and income opportunities among a cohort. Moreover, societies in which child poverty rates exceed old-age poverty rates tend to perform poorly in terms of intergenerational justice. Data on child poverty, notwithstanding their importance, are not always available for Arab countries but reportedly, at least one in every four children live below the national poverty line in Egypt, Iraq and Yemen.<sup>17</sup> To complement these findings and shed some light on the social challenges of intergenerational justice, this document uses other related indicators such as overall poverty, under-5 mortality and malnutrition.

30. The proportion of the Arab population living below the international poverty line of \$1.25 was estimated in 2015 at 7.4 per cent, compared with a world average of 14.5 per cent. Evidence also showed that poverty levels had increased by 34.5 per cent over the previous two decades.<sup>18</sup> The absence of a comprehensive

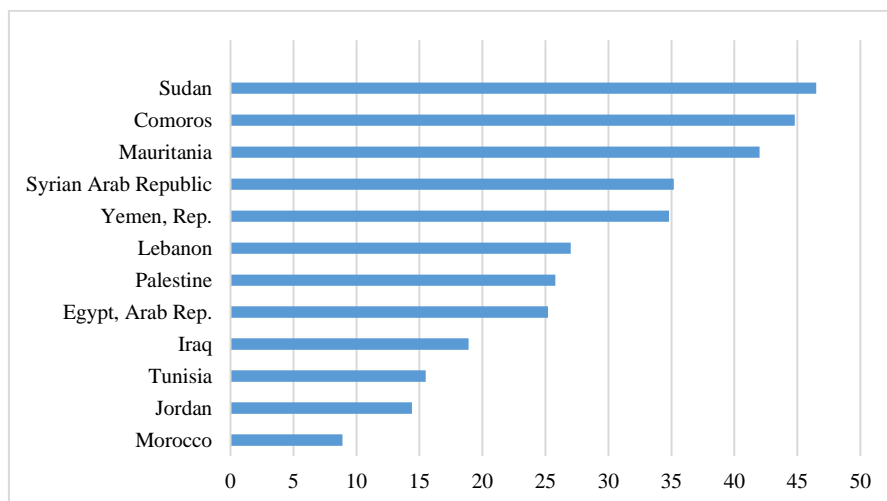
<sup>17</sup> ESCWA, *The Promises of Spring: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in Democratic Transitions (E/ESCWA/SDD/2013/3)*.

<sup>18</sup> ESCWA and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Arab Sustainable Development Report: First Edition, 2015 (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2015/3)*.



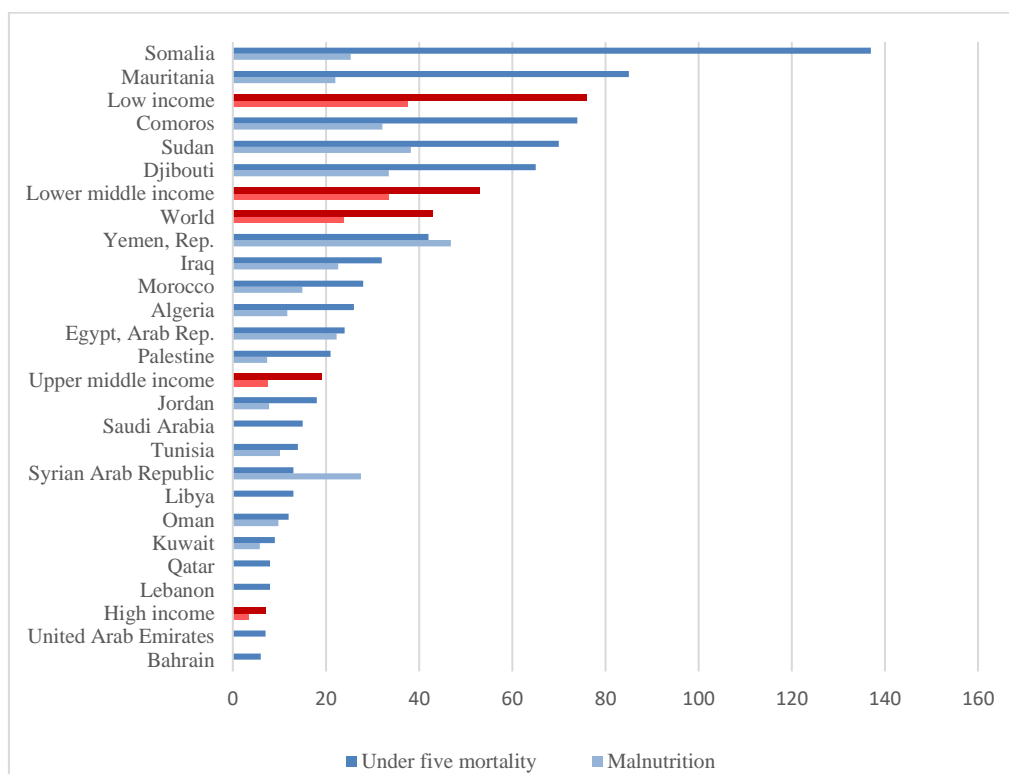
approach to social policy and the persistence of war and conflict remain major drivers of poverty on the regional level. A snapshot of poverty rates using national poverty lines in several Arab countries indicates that the spike in poverty levels was registered mostly in low-income countries, such as the Sudan, Comoros and Mauritania (figure 2).

**Figure 2. Poverty rates according to national poverty lines, most recent year available**



Source: Data compiled by the World Bank from official government sources where possible. Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC> (accessed 12 September 2016).

**Figure 3. Malnutrition (2008-2014) and under-5 mortality (2015) rates in Arab countries and major economic groupings**



Source: Data compiled by the World Bank. Available from <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.18> (accessed 12 September 2016).

Notes: The red colored bars are world and economic grouping indicators. Prevalence of malnutrition is measured by the percentage of children under 5 years of age suffering from stunting, calculated using height for age. The mortality rate is the number of deaths of children of children under 5 years of age per 1,000 live births.

31. Although most Arab countries have achieved considerable improvements in child health over the past two decades, this progress masks huge inequalities between countries, and poorest ones continue to register high levels of under-5 mortality and malnutrition (figure 3). The ongoing conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have certainly further exacerbated the situation in that regard.

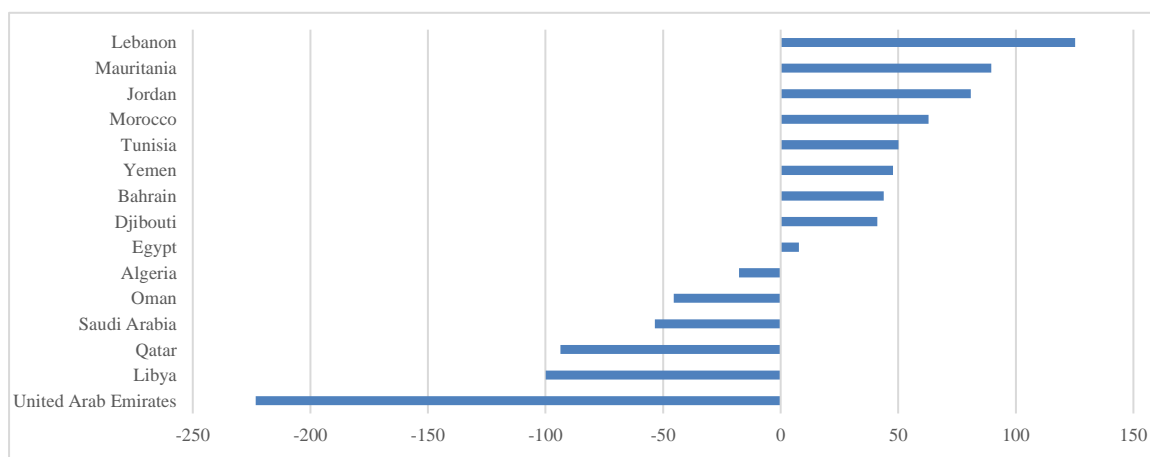
### C. PUBLIC DEBT

32. Intergenerational justice requires current generations not to leave a legacy of burdens to future generations if these are not matched by reasonable benefits. In other words, when a country borrows to finance its military spending or service existing debt, as opposed to optimizing growth and investing in its people, it mortgages future generations.

33. The measure of public debt left to future generations proposed by the IJI is total public debt in United States dollars per child. It is defined as total government debt divided by the population aged 0-14 years. This indicator is not available for Arab countries, so this document presents government debt as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) as a proxy for the economic and fiscal dimensions of intergenerational justice. Figure 4 shows that selected Arab countries range widely in terms of government debt, with several countries on the high-debt side due to current high spending, particularly on subsidies and debt service obligations.

34. An indicator of saving for future generations is the extent to which countries manage and make good use of sovereign wealth funds. In this context, the Resource Governance Index, which measures the quality of governance in the oil, gas and mining sectors, reveals that Arab countries score relatively well on the ‘enabling environment’ criterium, but relatively poorly on the ‘institutional and legal setting’.<sup>19</sup> An additional concern is the absence of effective regulatory oversight and regular environmental impact assessments.

**Figure 4. Government debt as a percentage of GDP in selected Arab countries, 2016**

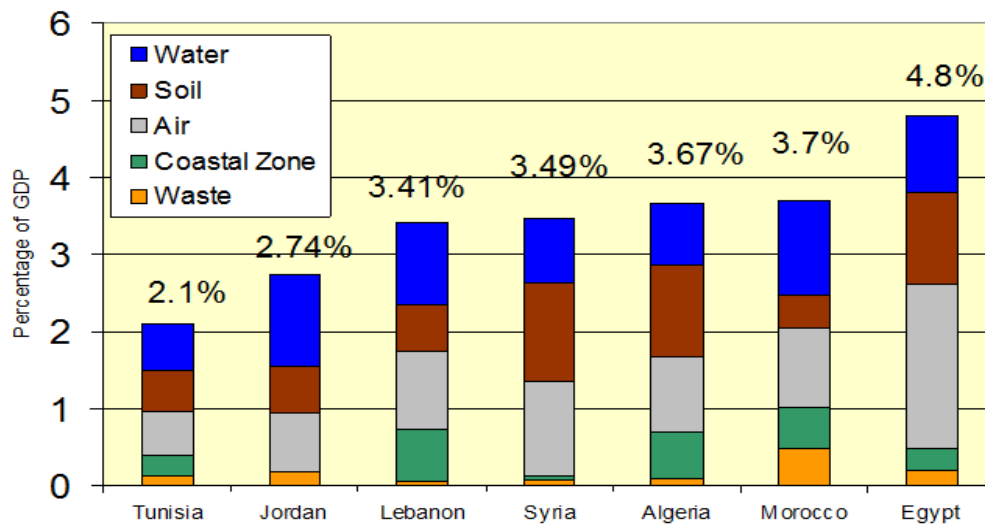


Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook database. Available from [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/01/weodata/index.aspx](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/01/weodata/index.aspx) (accessed 12 September 2016).

35. In addition to the above indicators, the cost of environmental degradation is used to evaluate annual damage caused by economic activities to water, air quality, agricultural land, forests, waste and coastal zones in monetary terms, and reflects the estimates as percentages of countries’ GDP. This cost has been estimated to range between 2.1 and 4.8 per cent of GDP in some Arab countries, but the environmental category that bears most of the impact varied.<sup>20</sup> In Egypt, for example, the main cost is associated with air pollution, while it is associated with soil degradation in the Syrian Arab Republic (figure 5).

<sup>19</sup> For more information, see <http://resourcegovernanceindex.org/>.

<sup>20</sup> Sherif Arif, “The cost of inaction in the Middle East and North Africa countries”, presentation made at the Second International Expert Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production, San Jose, Costa Rica, September 2005.

**Figure 5. The cost of environmental degradation by category (percentage of GDP), 2005**

Source: Sherif Arif, "The cost of inaction in the Middle East and North Africa countries", presentation made at the Second International Expert Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production, San Jose, Costa Rica, September 2005.

#### D. GENERATIONAL BIAS IN SOCIAL SPENDING

36. To account for generational spending patterns in a given country, the IJI applies the elderly bias indicator of social spending, which is the ratio of elderly-to non-elderly oriented spending. This indicator is of particular relevance in ageing societies, where spending can sometimes be skewed to meet the demands of older persons rather than those of the younger generations.

37. The problem with this indicator is that it is not suitable for assessing the fiscal implications of intergenerational justice in the Arab region, due to two main reasons. First, Arab countries are characterized by a youthful population, and will remain relatively so over the next few decades. Secondly, data on this indicator are seriously lacking in the region. Therefore, spending on education is proposed as an alternative indicator to measure the generational impact of spending.

38. Arab countries have invested about 5 per cent of their GDP and 20 per cent of their public expenditures in the past few decades to finance education. However, progress in education has not been uniform and continues to be masked by inequalities based on wealth, gender, type of school (public or private) and geographic location. Moreover, the quality of primary education, particularly in public schools, leaves much to be desired. In effect, internationally comparable tests of eight graders showed that the region's average is well below the international average.<sup>21</sup> These observations suggest that large investments in human capital alone are not enough to yield long-term positive effects on individuals' socioeconomic opportunities. They should be coupled with measures to address the missing links between access to quality education and citizens' rights.

### III. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: PROPOSALS TO ACHIEVE INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

39. Most global agreements and conventions that were adopted in the past decades, including the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, were inspired by a human-rights based, intergenerational approach to development that seeks to achieve justice for all. Their effective implementation will require stakeholders to move beyond aspirational language and work together to strike a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of the present and future generations.

<sup>21</sup> ESCWA, *The Promises of Spring*.

40. Several countries from the region and beyond have experimented with various interventions to promote sustainable development and ensure that the interest of future generations is safeguarded in policymaking processes. These interventions fall under the following three categories: (a) addressing social dimensions of intergenerational justice; (b) raising awareness of intergenerational issues; and (c) increasing voice and building partnerships.

A. ADDRESSING SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

1. *Ending child poverty*

41. In the context of parent-to-child transmission of poverty and the tight link between poverty and sustainable development, member States, with the support of ESCWA and all stakeholders, are encouraged to take all the necessary measures to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion. They should also step up their efforts to invest in child health and ensure access to quality education, including early childhood education, in addition to expanding social protection programmes that target low-income families and children.

2. *Addressing public debt*

42. Fiscal policies should generally aim at striking a balance between investments in the actions that support a better world for future generations without increasing debt burdens on present generations. Governments are thus invited to improve pension systems and sovereign wealth fund governance as means to tackle debt burdens. The performance of sovereign wealth funds can be enhanced through, for example, disclosure of contracts signed with extractive companies, production and timely dissemination of comprehensive reports on operations by regulatory agencies, increased transparency and application of accountability standards, increased control over corruption, improvement of the rule of law, and accelerated adoption of international reporting standards for both governments and the private sector.

3. *Reducing fiscal spending bias*

43. Member States are encouraged to continue developing child poverty programmes and implement pension reforms, with a view to correcting intergenerational spending bias. They would be well advised to avail of new approaches to reduce that bias, such as intergenerational earmarking, where a portion of the fiscal adjustment would be earmarked specifically to improve one of the dimensions of intergenerational justice. For example, the reduced fiscal burden from raising the retirement age could result in increased spending on early childhood education. In addition, analytical techniques such as the benefit-incidence analysis can help to identify the winners and losers from various fiscal spending choices, including services, transfers or price changes. In this context, member States should be encouraged to continue improving data collection, analysis and monitoring and measure progress in advancing intergenerational justice.

B. RAISING AWARENESS OF INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES

1. *Understanding the moral obligations towards unborn generations  
in the context of justice and equality*

44. Governments are invited to promote an intergenerational culture in cooperation with social partners and civil society, and to enhance the understanding of present generations of the concept of intergenerational justice and the entitlement of equality among generations. The basis for moral obligations towards future people is the equal concern and respect owed to all humans, regardless of where and when they may have been/will be born.

## 2. *Rationalizing the needs and sacrifices of present generations*

45. Although the precise needs and preferences of future generations cannot be exactly known, Governments, together with all stakeholders, are invited to engage in attempting to identify or project these needs, to the extent possible, in order to ensure that today's sacrifices are reasonable and would yield a positive outcome in the future. The relationship between generations could be articulated in a positive manner, with less emphasis on the negative trade-offs and greater emphasis on synergies and win-win situations.

## 3. *Strengthening education for sustainable development*

46. Investment in people, especially their education, is critical to intergenerational justice as a means of transmitting accumulated knowledge to future generations. Member States are called upon to mainstream the concern for future generations through strengthening civic education on global citizenship, particularly among children and youth. Other measures include the development of sustainable development curricula, enhanced teacher training, more effective use of information and communications technology to enhance learning outcomes and leadership training.

## C. INCREASING VOICE AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

### 1. *Democratizing decision-making processes on intergenerational issues*

47. Governments are advised to debate decisions that influence the allocation of burdens and benefits between generations in a participatory process that provides all people with an opportunity to influence their lives and future. Participatory budgeting is one example that allows citizens to identify, discuss and prioritize public spending projects that may have a generational impact. In this context, Governments are encouraged to engage youth as their contribution is vital to the achievement of sustainable development. Youth representation can be enhanced through a number of mechanisms, including lowering voting age, incentivizing youth voting, introducing youth quota in parliament, and allowing child proxy votes. Moreover, civil society is encouraged to be actively engaged in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies that have intergenerational impact.

### 2. *Harnessing research efforts and increasing the role of the private sector*

48. Long-term scientific research and technology form part of an intergenerational strategy necessary to develop substitutes for some natural resources, to extract and use resources more efficiently, and to understand and manage long-term threats to the quality of the environment. Member States are called upon to create broad policy coalitions with the private sector, academia and research institutions, guided by the ethical principles of justice and solidarity and the fundamentals of corporate social responsibility. The participation of the private sector can be strengthened through promoting public-private partnerships, supporting regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives, and engaging in responsible business practices and corporate social responsibility.

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