

The Arab Republic of Egypt
Voluntary National Review on Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals
(For Presentation at the 2016 HLPF)
Executive Summary

OVERVIEW:

In September 2015, a historic United Nations Summit witnessed the launch of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it includes, with supreme ambition and a transformational vision. With the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) in July 2015 for financing development, and the Paris Agreement for Climate Change in December of the same year, 2015 constituted the year of negotiations that paved the way for reshaping the new paradigm for sustainable development for the 15 years to come. Egypt has been actively engaged in the preparation and the negotiations for setting this new paradigm shift thus far, and will remain committed to the effective implementation of these historical agreements through mutually-beneficial cooperation, in order to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities, and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Egypt has adopted an approach that is characterized by a high level of ambition, firm commitment and dynamic innovation towards tackling this transformative agenda- In alignment with the 2030 Agenda, Egypt launched in March 2015 its strategy for sustainable development “Egypt’s Vision 2030”. The Egyptian forward- looking strategy is unprecedented in its scope and significance at the national level. It spans over the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely; economic, social and environmental dimensions, and outlines the broader principles which will guide Egypt in pursuing its developmental goals. The overarching aim of the strategy is for Egypt to possess a competitive, balanced and diversified economy, dependent on innovation and knowledge, based on justice, social integrity and participation, in a balanced and diversified ecological collaboration system, investing the ingenuity of place and human capital to achieve sustainable development and to improve Egyptians' quality of life, in a state-driven process, with the full participation of all relevant stakeholders.

Nevertheless, this new paradigm shift in international relations, which changes the sources and scale of development knowledge and practices, reveals a number of challenges at the national, regional, and global levels that could slowdown achieving the SDGs. Addressing these challenges requires the collective efforts of all, in the spirit of shared responsibility towards the transformative and universal framework for global development, bearing in mind the uneven capacities and resources of countries. This will only be achievable through the sharing of knowledge and experiences on innovation, financing, capacity strengthening, know-how and technology transfer, and, above all, international development cooperation on financing for development to ensure the sufficient means of implementation are mobilized that reflect the strong global commitment towards the “leaving no one behind” approach.

KEY MESSAGES ;

1. Preparations at the national level:

For Egypt, inclusive and sustainable development is a core constitutional value and an overall objective. Before the launch of the SDGs in September 2015, Egypt committed itself towards achieving sustainable development through the Egyptian Constitution,. The Constitution covers the three dimensions of sustainable development; as well as many of the 17 SDGs in its different articles, presented as national goals, binding all sectors and

levels of government, and calling upon different stakeholders to participate in a state-lead developmental process towards achieving them. The new constitution marks significant improvement compared to the previous one in securing citizens' rights to education, health, protection, and development. It contains articles on strengthening governance, equality, and social justices. It is a modern constitution that ensures the constitutional rights of citizens, while guaranteeing that no one is left behind.

2. Integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development:

The Government of Egypt has expressed its full commitment to achieving the SDGs, which extends from its strong commitment in the past to the Millennium Development Goals. In accordance with the Egyptian constitutional mandate, the Government of Egypt immediately embarked on planning and implementing major national projects that serve the objectives of inclusive and sustainable development. These projects were later mainstreamed into the newly adopted National Strategy for Sustainable Development—Egypt Vision 2030 (SDS, Vision 2030). The SDS was drafted through an inclusive and integrative process that ensured the involvement of various governmental bodies, societal sectors, academia and all relevant stakeholders. It was endorsed by the newly elected parliament in February 2016. The SDS serves as an umbrella of all development strategies in Egypt, and is strongly guided by the universal SDGs. The SDS will be implemented by all stakeholders including the Government, private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs), and international development partners in a concerted approach.

3. Translating ambitions into actions:

Investing in human capacity and institutional capabilities as cornerstones of sustainable and inclusive development, and as such are highly emphasized in Egypt's development strategy. The implementation and success of Egypt Vision 2030 and the SDGs, and their integrated nature, requires addressing human and institutional capacity gaps through the building of capabilities and competencies at all levels. In that regard, the Government works on harnessing the demographic dividend and significant effort is being focused on investing in Egypt's human capital; especially through education and training, and boosting decent and sustainable job creation. In this regard, specific efforts are directed at youth and women empowerment. On the institutional side, creating highly qualified planners and implementers and civil servants in relevant sectors is crucial for Egypt to realize the SDGs.

The Government puts great emphasis on customizable knowledge sharing, digital economy and disaggregated data for the achievement of the SDGs. The Government recognizes science, technology and innovation as key drivers of economic growth and sustainable development. For that, Egypt highly values the incorporation of technology transfer and diffusion within the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) to accelerate this global process.. In that vein, Egypt is establishing the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks, financial instruments and public-private partnerships to support innovation, science and technology.

4. The way forward:

Despite the fact that the SDGs are still at an early stage of implementation due to their recent launch, the Government of Egypt has made significant steps and has exerted commendable innovative efforts towards integrating, institutionalizing and implementing, as well as following- up on and reviewing them. For example;

- *At the national level*, In December 2015, a national inter-ministerial committee, established by Prime Ministerial Decree was established (for which the Ministry of International Cooperation has been assigned the role of coordinator and rapporteur) to follow up on the implementation of the SDGs, and ensure proper alignment and integration of the SDGs with Egypt's sustainable development strategies and priorities. Monitoring and evaluation units have been established in line ministries to support the monitoring of relevant programs and policies. The reactivation of the Strategic Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Ministry of International Cooperation took place in 2015 and was established within the institutional structure of the Ministry. The objective of the unit is to enhance effective development cooperation through all stages of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) management cycle. In April 2016, a Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) within the National Statistical Agency (CAPMAS) was established to lead the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the SDGs and Egypt Vision 2030.- Furthermore, Egypt has coordinated closely UN agencies providing technical assistance in establishing the necessary mechanisms and sharing relevant tools to support the SDGs at the national level.

- *At the sectoral level*; to localize the SDGs, a number of projects, programs, and initiatives working toward achieving the SDGs have been launched or are in the process of being initiated. They cover the three dimensions of sustainable development. These projects cover the whole spectrum of the ten pillars of the SDS and the 17 SDGs. A key priority of these efforts is to ensure that those who are most in need, especially youth; women, individuals with special needs; and individuals in underserved areas are effectively targeted and their standards of living improved. In fact, Year 2016 was announced as the Year of the Youth. An example of these projects is the recently launched Social Housing Programme, which aims to improve the affordability of formal housing for low-income households and is expected to reach more than 3.6 million beneficiaries in the lowest income groups, across several Governorates, and to replace 150 thousand housing units in slum areas. Another example is the Takaful and Karama (Solidarity and Dignity) social protection programs, which are cash transfer programs conditional on households in which children are enrolled in school and undertake regular medical examinations.

- *At the regional level*, Egypt, along with African countries, is working through the African Union Commission (AUC) and the United Nations to integrate implementations of both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Egypt hosted the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Most recently, Egypt has also organized High Level Meeting for National Reviews for the six voluntary countries presenting their national review at the 2016 High Level Political in Cairo in May 2016. In line with its historical commitment to support developing countries, especially in Africa, Egypt is sharing its successful experiences for promoting sustainable development in these countries through the Egyptian Agency for Partnership for Development (EAPD) that provides capacity, building, sharing of expertise and providing development assistance, through various models for trilateral, bilateral and South-South cooperation. Another successful example of regional cooperation is Cairo Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA) which is at the forefront of national, regional and international efforts to provide " African Solutions to African Problems", focusing on peacekeeping, peace building, and crisis management in post-conflict situations.

- *At the international level*, Egypt was actively engaged in the two-year negotiation process that led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and will remain committed and actively engaged in the setting of the parameters of the follow-up and review process of

the SDGs in future. This is reflected through Egypt's volunteering to undertake the first national review of the 2016 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), to be among the pioneering countries that are presenting these reviews in the first HLPF since the adoption of the SDGs.

Political leadership has shown strong willingness and ambition to achieving the SDGs, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. There is much focus stressing on the importance of facing global challenges based on the disparity in capacities and resources, as well as the national priorities and diversity of our cultures, and the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to development. Furthermore, development is seen being regarded as a fundamental human right in all countries, for all people, with a particular focus on African countries and other developing nations.

KEY NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The path towards achieving the SDGs is not an easy one; it encompasses a range of local, regional and global challenges that require the effective pooling and coordinating of efforts on all levels to be overcome. Egypt faces varied challenges in different areas of sustainable development (social; economic; and environmental), and on different levels (national; regional; and international) that need to be tackled in order to be able to accelerate and strengthen developmental impact. For example:

At national level, an overall challenge that has far-reaching implications is the high birth rate, which needs to be addressed to harness the demographic dividend and to convert the brain drain phenomena to a brain gain one. In that vein, it was announced that water scarcity is a major challenge in the light of the high rates of population growth and production and consumption needs. Issues related to mitigation and adaptation to climate change also present a critical challenge that must be addressed. Also, energy needs for Egypt's growing economy and expanding population must be met in order to assure continued growth and sustainable development. Another noteworthy challenge is the share of informality in Egypt's economy, which is high and growing. Egypt's informal economy has been expanding and its activities booming since the January 25th Revolution. Since we can manage what we measure, achieving the SDGs would require considerable efforts to formalize the informal sector through developing proper incentive structures. It is worth mentioning that efforts in that regard are currently underway, and a national strategy has been adopted to develop and formalize the informal sector. Finally, while Egypt has achieved commendable progress with regard to women's empowerment, notably girls' access to education, drastic reduction in the practice of female genital mutilation among young girls, and a historic milestone in female representation in the parliament, there are still barriers impeding women and girls from realizing their potential as powerful agents of social and economic progress.

At the regional level, instability in the region in neighboring states, especially Libya and Syria, has had a negative spillover effect on the Egyptian economy, mostly evident in the tourism sector; with subsequent effects on the financial (revenues, local currency value, etc.) and social (unemployment rate, poverty, etc) conditions of the country.

On the international level, the global economic slowdown posed an economic challenge that affects the capacity for resource mobilization, which in turn caused a high budget deficit and a fiscal crunch that hindered the mobility of needed resources to fully implement the development objectives, programs and projects. In this regard, there is also a pressing need for enhancing an equitable, fair and transparent multilateral trading system to overcome trade barriers that hinder sustainable and inclusive economic growth,

as well as an urgent need for the rational use of property rights that does not hinder sustainable development in developing countries. Furthermore, there is a strong need for more coordinated strategic action towards achieving the SDGs. Despite the commendable progress made, Egypt, similar to most middle-income countries, is at an early stage of the learning curve towards effective strategic and coordinated action for achieving the SDGs. The journey is still long in terms of implementing the right mix of policy initiatives, particularly environmental-fiscal reform initiatives, which are typically underleveraged. There is also still work to be done with regards to embedding the SDGs within the national budgeting process, in which the Ministry of Finance will need to play a major role in terms of policy formulation and implementation. It is also important to note that coordination at the sub-national and local levels is inherently complex, and requires the establishment of effective and streamlined coordination mechanisms. For feedback mechanisms, including monitoring; learning and adaptation; integrated sets of indicators will need to be developed and harmonized with national policies. Integrated sets of indicators coupled with informal approaches will allow analysis of the inherent trade-offs and inter-linkages among the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW: THE ADDED-VALUE

Recent efforts of the Government of Egypt are a reflection of its priorities and commitment to help citizens achieve a life characterized by dignity, freedom, and equal opportunity, ensuring that no one is left behind on the path to sustainable human development, inclusive growth and shared prosperity.. The path to achieving the SDGs cannot be charted in advance of the international development cooperation needed to ensure sufficient means of implementation that is a critical factor in ensuring success in implementing the SDGS. In that regard, Egypt highly values the HLPF as the platform for reviewing and following-up the implementation of the SDGs through an interactive process of peer-learning and sharing of experiences and best practices, and mutually-beneficial cooperation that is driven by national priorities, and takes into account national sovereignty, with the ultimate purpose of supporting the global vision of sustainable development that leaves no one behind.