Formal Session of Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS

6-9 September 2016

Statement by:

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Introduction

Mr. President, Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my privilege to present proposals for the new Country Programmes for Lebanon, Morocco and Algeria and the first extension of the Country Programme for Sudan.

The context in which these country programmes were developed is complex and reflect the range of development and humanitarian challenges in the Arab region. On the one hand there are acute humanitarian challenges that countries must respond to, including a large refugee crisis, internal displacement, and increased gender-based violence. On the other hand, there are the on-going development needs that require attention such as institutional capacity building, strengthening health systems and access to SRH services and RR, early marriage, gender inequality, civic engagement of young people, and harmful practices including FGM and GBV.

The involvement in acute and protracted crises have negatively affected capacities within the region, strained resources and due to the fluid situation on the ground, changed priorities of Governments and donors. In close collaboration with governments, these are the challenges that UNFPA aims to address through the support outlined in each country programme document.

Throughout the region, UNFPA will rely on policy dialogue and advocacy to improve access to reproductive health services and support the integration of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as well as prevention of gender-based violence into national strategies.

UNFPA will continue working with governments in the region emphasizing the critical social and economic value of the demographic dividend. We will continue advocating the importance of investing in education beyond the primary level, but even more fundamentally in health, including sexual and reproductive health - to unleash the economic potential of women, girls and young people. UNFPA will support the enhancement of social systems that are responsive to the needs of people and generate opportunities for their populations to realize their full potential, thus contributing to sustainable, secure, and peaceful societies.
UNFPA will remain a strong supporter of UN coherence including better coordination, joint resource mobilization, and knowledge sharing. All three country programmes will pursue joint programming with other agencies to maximize the knowledge and resources of the UN as a whole. Where possible, operations will be streamlined and interventions will capitalize on the comparative advantage of the agencies.

Customization and Implementation of the SDGs

The SDGs, in particular Goals 3 good health and well-being, and 5 gender equality are at the heart of the UNFPA mandate. Across the region, UNFPA is actively engaging with governments and partners in operationalizing the Sustainable Development goals and contributing to the development and implementation of rollout plans with UN Country Teams. All three programmes will support countries in the capacity development, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. In Lebanon, UNFPA is leading, on behalf of the UN system, the advocacy efforts and capacity development for monitoring SDGs. UNFPA will work with the Central Administration of Statistics to facilitate broad-based understanding of the SDGs. UNFPA Morocco will also work with the Government to support national and sub-national efforts for monitoring SDG indicators and to engage partners in advancing rights-based and culturally sensitive policies. UNFPA in Algeria will support, together with other UN agencies, national efforts to review policies using data-including from the next census- to monitor progress towards the SDGs

New and Innovative Strategies in the Programmes

With a focus on the large cohort of youth in the region, all three country programmes have developed context relevant innovative strategies to work to ensure that no one is left behind. In Algeria, UNFPA interventions aim to change the quality of lives by engaging youth, especially boys and young men, to prevent and combat VAW. In Lebanon, UNFPA will continue supporting innovative strategies to generate and disseminate data, particularly on young people. The programme will support the utilization of information technology including the use big data. In Morocco, UNFPA will rely on policy dialogue, advocacy and knowledge transfer to contribute to the reduction of inequalities in access to reproductive health services.

Humanitarian

As mentioned, the region is facing a number of humanitarian crises and while UNFPA works with partners to respond to those, it also aims to support building resilient systems and communities. The Arab States Regional Office has developed a Resilience Strategy that will be rolled out in 2017 to guide country offices in their work. UNFPA will work with national counterparts to enable preparedness planning and develop mechanisms that enable a more rapid and effective response to crises.
UNFPA Lebanon will continue scaling up its interventions in response to the humanitarian crisis, based on the government response plan and the key humanitarian principles of inclusiveness, accountability, doing no harm, and reaching the most vulnerable.

Partnerships and Resource Mobilization

Expanding partnerships with governments, civil society, donors, and the private sector are key to achieving results. All three programmes will pursue broad partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of their interventions. With the advent of the new country programmes, Algeria, Morocco and Lebanon have developed resource mobilization strategies to complement UNFPA core funds. These strategies will focus on co-financing where possible, in kind contributions and engaging new partners, including the private sector, to deliver results.

And to ensure measurable and sustainable results, UNFPA in Arab States will continue enhancing the monitoring and evaluation of its programmes. The three programmes presented today have developed a costed evaluation plan, SMART indicators and will ensure that resources are available to monitor and report on programmes in a timely manner. The Regional Office will continue to document and share good practices to expand knowledge management and benefit from successful experiences throughout the region.

Conclusion

The Arab region with its diversity and richness presents not only challenges but opportunities that UNFPA will capitalize on while responding to the development and humanitarian needs of the region. The mandate of UNFPA - delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person's potential is fulfilled remains more critical than ever in the region. We remain here to support the region to realize its full potential, reach the most vulnerable, and ensure that no one is left behind. The three programmes presented today reflect the ability of UNFPA to respond to each context with tailored interventions. Through the implementation of these programmes UNFPA will support the governments, civil society and other national actors to move forward towards meeting the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

I would like to thank our national counterparts in Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco for their support, cooperation and commitment toward a fruitful partnership. I thank you very much.