Messages from the Regions - ES intervention

Thank you Chair

Distinguished delegates,

Let me start with digital technology. Kuwaiti tech entrepreneur Ahmad Marafi has shown us that young talents and startups across the Arab region are already seizing digital opportunities. But imagine what they could achieve with the right ecosystem in place.

A lot is being done to develop this ecosystem, especially in AI.

Many Arab countries are setting up national AI structures, focusing on building skills, making investments, and creating supportive regulations, all while keeping ethics in mind.
• Gulf Cooperation Council countries are using the sandbox concept. This allows them to experiment with new tech and promote innovation-friendly regulations in areas like fintech, lawtech, and data protection.

• Middle-income Arab countries are focusing on investing in human talent and ensuring that everyone has reliable and affordable Internet access.

• Arab LDCs need help with basic connectivity and financing, and countries in conflict face even more complex challenges.

At ESCWA, we are committed to expanding our analysis of megatrends like the metaverse and AI, and looking at their impacts on jobs and future of work in the Arab region.

We’ve already helped 400 SMEs digitize, and we’re supporting the “Arab Digital Agenda” to push for regional AI cooperation.

Plus, we’re enhancing our AI-enabled data ecosystem “Manara,” with a new module called “Mustashar” to provide clear and concise policy responses.
Now, let’s talk about financing. Most Arab countries are struggling with rising debt and slow economic growth, which limits their ability to invest in the SDGs.

In 2023, government debt in MICs reached nearly $800 billion, with around $26 billion and $74 billion dollar equivalent paid for debt servicing last year.

To address this, ESCWA has established the Arab Debt Management Group, which aims to improve the capacities of debt managers through peer exchange.

We’re leading efforts to create financing roadmaps to guide public agencies in investing in high-impact national priorities.

Our intelligent policy simulation tools help member states monitor social expenditures, optimize public investment, and enhance budget efficiency and credibility.
But we can’t do this alone.

Reforms to the international financial architecture are necessary.

To end, ESCWA will continue to support member states as they prepare for the 4th Financing for Sustainable Development conference, ensuring that Arab priorities in domestic resource mobilization, equitable taxation, sustainable debt, and combating illicit financial flows are represented.

Thank you.