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# Third Arab Forum for Equality

**“Addressing inequality in times of multiple crises”**

**Cairo, Egypt, 4–5 June 2024**



## Background

It is increasingly clear that crisis has become a permanent feature of the policy environment in the Arab region. Indeed, the Arab region has suffered from multiple and overlapping crises in recent years. Conflict, economic crises, environmental crises, humanitarian crises, and political crises have constrained economic growth, inhibited social development, exacerbated existing inequalities, and created new inequalities. Many of these crises reinforce one another, and are both a cause and consequence of inequality. While crises exacerbate and create inequalities by disproportionately hurting the most vulnerable, inequality can also trigger crises by driving social dissatisfaction or unsustainable development. This new era of crises requires a novel policy paradigm that reflects the urgency and depth of the challenge, and ensures that policymakers are not trapped in an endless process of short-term policymaking, unable to deliver on sustainable long-term development.

The 2024 Arab Forum for Equality will examine inequality in times of polycrises, demonstrating how the compound effects of overlapping crises in the region are having a devastating impact on the most vulnerable and on the ability of Governments to protect their citizens; while exploring policy solutions to reduce or mitigate inequality in times of crisis, and ensure that policymakers can exit crisis mode over the medium term.

In this context, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Sawiris Foundation, and Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, at New York University, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Middle East Regional Technical Assistance Center (METAC) will hold the third Arab Forum for Equality under the patronage of the Ministry of Social Solidarity of Egypt, in Cairo, Egypt, on 4 and 5 June 2024.



## Objectives

The third Arab Forum for Equality will bring together policymakers, concerned ministers, the private sector, experts, civil society organizations and young people from the Arab region and globally. The Forum aims to continue the discussion generated at the first (Amman, 30–31 May 2022) and second (Beirut, 6–7 June 2023) forums, which engaged stakeholders in a dialogue focused on practical solutions to tackle inequality. The Forum will show how high vulnerability to polycrises can affect inequality within a country and between countries, and will propose practical solutions to reduce inequalities in times of crisis, drawing on examples from around the world and key policy lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Forum aims to achieve the following:

- Continue the dialogue between policymakers in the Arab region and other regions, experts, and civil society organizations on how to reduce inequalities.
- Draw links between inequality and multiple crises.
- Showcase best practices from countries that were able to reduce inequalities in times of crisis, or have put longer-term policies in place to counter threats of crisis and ensure stability.
- Share innovative and practical policy solutions to reduce inequalities, with a focus on crises.



## Provisional agenda

### Opening: welcome remarks

The welcome remarks will be delivered by the Egyptian Minister of Social Solidarity and the ESCWA Executive Secretary.

### Session 1: Global and regional drivers of the polycrises and inequality

The session will discuss global drivers of crises and their implications for the Arab region, including the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, rising debt burdens, and the change in global financial architecture. It will introduce the concept of polycrises, and show how it is increasing the risk of inequality.

### Session 2: Polycrises and inequality in the Arab region: an unpleasant mix

The session will discuss how the simultaneous occurrence of multiple crises can increase their intensity and impact inequality at the country level. It will explore the interplay between crises and the challenges they pose to inequality.





### Session 3: Everyday realities in times of crisis

The session will discuss the different human manifestations of inequality in the Arab region, and how they have been driven by polycrises. It will include a discussion about Arab people's perceptions of inequality and how they have changed over time; and how inequality is heightened by multiple crises thus impeding access to opportunities, using examples from several countries.

### Session 4: Protecting equality in times of crisis

The session will focus on short-term solutions (including emergency humanitarian aid and disaster risk responses) to protect people and prevent widening inequalities in times of crisis.

### Session 5: Leaving no one behind: preventing crises from deepening intergenerational inequalities

The session will consider the long-term impact of crises on inequality, and will present policy solutions to protect long-term sustainable development given the changing global landscape. By considering various policies, the session will shed light on successful interventions and lessons learned. The discussion will cover policies adopted in the Arab region, offering a comprehensive view of regional practices, while also examining global best practices.

### Session 6: Solidarity and Coordination

The session will highlight the role of various actors, including the international community and international financial organizations, in ensuring that inequality is addressed during times of multiple crises, and in reducing the vulnerability of countries when facing polycrises.

