



## **Forward**

In 2015, when 193 countries adopted the most ambitious development agenda in history, they pledged to achieve gender equality and leave no one behind. Gender equality underpins all aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I am proud to present the first Arab Gender Gap Report, which focuses on gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report comes at a critical moment, as discussions on achieving sustainable development for all in the region are intensifying, propelled by the need for more inclusive societies to transform the world. The report provides the Arab region with insight to create a more gender-equitable culture, and identifies challenges and obstacles our societies face. Data has the power to shed light on neglected issues, drive policy change, and increase accountability for the realization of rights. I strongly believe that data can push forward the current debate on gender equality and women's empowerment, and strengthen it with evidence.

The Arab Gender Gap Report explores the status of gender equality across 22 Arab countries, through gender-related indicators linked to issues inherent in the SDGs. The report is unique as it includes regional priority gender-equality indicators – quantitative and qualitative – to help fast track progress on policies and laws at the country level, and to monitor the implementation of the SDGs. The report reveals that critical gender gaps persist in key areas, despite the gains achieved by Arab countries over the years. The report also shows that although several countries have achieved important milestones towards gender equality, a 'last mile' remains to be covered before girls and women enjoy full equality and the realization of their rights.

The report also reveals a gap in the production of many gender-related indicators, resulting from weak household-based data and administrative records. There is an urgent need to strengthen the alliance between national statistical offices and ministries that produce statistical data to ensure the production of quality gender statistics for effective evidenced-based gender policies. When women are excluded from statistical data, it becomes difficult to formulate policies that respond to the needs of both women and men. In the coming years, the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA) will continue to assist countries in producing more gender and SDG indicators. ESCWA will also explore other data sources, including big data and non-traditional data, to provide a more complete picture on the status of girls and boys, and women and men in the Arab region.

**I hope you will find the Arab Gender Gap Report inspiring and useful.**



***Rola Dashti,***  
*Executive Secretary of ESCWA*